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MAY PAPERS

FR. PURBRICK, S J.

MAY PAPERS

ROEHAMPTON:

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MAY PAPERS:

OR

THOUGHTS ON THE LITANIES OF LORETO.

BY

EDWARD IGNATIUS PURBRICK,

Priest of the Society of Jesus.

LONDON:

BURNS AND OATES, 17 PORTMAN STREET.

1874.

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TO

The Mother of God,

THESE PAPERS

ARE HUMBLY DEDICATED

AS A

THANK-OFFERING.

PREFACE.

THESE Papers were written for the use of the boys at Stonyhurst College during the Month of Mary. They were suggested by the difficulty of finding any short lessons for the month addressed directly and especially to boys. They are now published in the hope that they may be found useful in other Colleges and Schools.

The Author, as he did not originally intend them for the public eye, felt no scruple in taking several ideas from the writings of others, and even occasionally in using their words without special recognition, when he found

beautiful thoughts expressed in language which he could not hope to rival. It will be enough to acknowledge here his indebtedness to that great master of devotional and ascetical writing, the late Father Faber. The Author is not conscious of having adopted *verbatim* more than a few sentences in this way.

Stonyhurst College,
April 27, 1873.

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A.M.D.G.

MAY PAPERS.

Introductory.

ALL the year round a good scholar's heart is with Mary. To her he turns naturally as to his very dear Mother. She may send him out on her errands, but the strange faces which he meets make the hour of his return doubly sweet. But there are times when our Blessed Mother would keep us close to her at home. This month she wants to drill us in some one of her many lessons. We are to take our places in her school. O blessed month in the school of Mary!—"Hear me, and your soul shall live;" "He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord." Yes, her words are worth hearing; her tasks deserve to be got well by heart. But then we *must* get them by heart. With all her science, with all her winning ways and happy methods of instruction, she may talk to us by the hour, she may drill us

in head and heart the whole month through, and yet June may find us as ignorant, as dull and slow of heart, as if she had not spoken. Her fault it cannot be, for her power to teach us is only equalled by her will.

How, then, are we to turn this month of privilege to best account? Clearly it is not enough to sit upon the benches. Passive impressions are weakened by repetition. We must not lounge our time away, or we shall be as men who turn over the leaves of a book without concentration of mind, without adverting to the sense of what is written there. Such a reader will never make a learned man. If, then, we would learn that wisdom which is taught in Mary's school, we must have the energies, the working virtues, of scholars. To graduate in holiness we must go through the drudgery of pupillage. What, then, are the virtues of scholars? One word sums them all up—*teachableness.* For how many qualities go to make a teachable boy! Thirst for knowledge, esteem for the teacher, pliability of will, fearlessness of exertion, quickness of impression, unhesitating obedience, and steadfast resolve—

these all must be found together in a boy before he can be called truly teachable. They are the raw material of the accomplished scholar. If these are wanting, what would our Lady have to work upon? She cannot make us good in spite of ourselves, but it would be in spite of ourselves if she wrought us into scholars without our bringing these qualifications to start with. Surely we cannot refuse her this. It is not much she asks of us. A certain amount of talent is required for worldly learning, but Mary is content if the heart be ready. The dullest intellect can get on in her school. Will, not wit, heart rather than head, make the apt learner of her lessons. With her the only disqualification is dulness and slowness of heart. The simplest, the meanest among us, can rid ourselves of this by an effort of the will. Let us then, for this month at least, be generous enough to put out the strength necessary to ensure her favour. When she cries, "Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation," let it be no mere lip response on our part, "My heart is ready, Mother, my heart is ready." Let us drink of the spirit of the Blessed Berchmans, when, with

earnest sincerity, he told this same dear Mother that he would not rest until he had obtained a true and solid devotion towards her. Then shall we become partakers in her treasures, and like her be, in our measure, "replenished with good things."

But as purpose is always strengthened by oneness of object, as those shoot best who have one fixed and certain aim, we shall find it of the greatest service in bracing our will for the month to set before ourselves a *definite and single end* of our devotions. Nothing ruins sound learning so certainly as dipping. The vain curiosity which prompts the young to dip into a variety of subjects without fathoming one, is invariably punished by the worthlessness of a shallow and superficial mind. If we want to be repaid by a luxuriant crop, we must do more than merely break the soil of learning. We must delve into its rich and loamy depths. And so too the practices of this month will be sheer labour lost, if we are so unreasonable as to cram the whole catalogue of virtues into this short course of study in Mary's school. Our programme may be showy, but the result will be blank disappoint-

ment, and universal failure. We cannot learn to be humble in a day. We cannot sound the depths of the wells of contrition by a few lengths of line. The gold of charity will be unrifled by our hands, still deeply buried in the ore, unless we make up our minds to drive our shafts deep into the concealing earth. Let us then concentrate our force, let there be no waste power. By spreading we can gain nothing but an illusive show, while we shall lose for a certainty in depth and solidity. It will therefore be our wisdom to confine our efforts, or at least constantly to direct our chief efforts, to some one branch of that wisdom which Mary has it in hand to teach. It matters little upon what we fix, provided we do fix upon some one definite point to be gained by this month's exercises. These instructions may be different, and their immediate ends various, but he who is bent upon one object, will instinctively bring every lesson to bear upon that one; and his reward will be proportioned to his efforts.

Once again then, the scholar who desires to make the best use of the Month of Mary, must bring to it a *teachable* spirit and a *definite aim.*

Sancta Maria

OUR first impulse when we come into Mary's presence is that of loving children at the sight of their own dear Mother. In the overflowing fulness of our hearts we rush to her feet and call her by every tender name at our command. One after another, faltering from emotion, we pour out our epithets of love. Holy Mother, dear Mother, kind Mother, so we go on, scarcely attending to the separate meaning of each phrase, but sure that all, as they gush from our lips into her bosom, will persuade her of our childlike affection. This is the spirit of the Litanies, which are a natural outburst of intense and glowing heat of soul. But if we sift the meaning of each title we shall find them all wonderfully true and expressive. Let us now stop, as well we may, at the first—Holy Mary.

Thou only art holy, O my God—*Tu solus Sanctus.* Holy of Holies is Thy name. No one made Thee holy; holiness is Thy very

nature, Thine inmost essence, Thine own adorable Self. Lord, I acknowledge it; there is none like to Thee in heaven or on earth. None for whom by right of nature the title "Holy" can be claimed.

And yet, because there is no selfishness in God, because it is a delight to Him to impart of His boundless perfections, it is not strange that in a lower sense we should be able to address others by this title. The one exclusive well-head of holiness He must ever be. None other can aspire to that perfection. But as creation is in itself a proof of the liberal outpouring of that fountain's waters, so the sanctification of the creature is the starting up of lesser springs, which derive all their virtue from the same eternal and all-productive fountain.

Amongst these ebullitions of divine love and munificence, none comes closer to the infinite, none, in the purity and life-giving virtue of its waters, more nearly resembles the parent spring than that sparkling, that gushing overflow, Mary, spotless in her Conception. Bubbling up from the bottom of the earth, there was no taint of earth upon those waters. From the depths of

eternity God had ordained that the stream of grace so long flowing from Him through the earth should gather itself into one forcible volume of dewy splendour, and shoot up without resistance towards the level of its source.

Such is Mary. Not holy by any pre-existing right of her own, but by the ineffable free gift of her Creator. Oh, with what a thrill of holy love did her heart bound up at the first moment of her existence, and attest by its first act whence she had drawn all her peerless excellence! The more, then, we extol her purity, her holiness, the more honour do we render to God Himself. If all which is hers is also pre-eminently and unspeakably His; if we dwell affectionately on that which, though greater than language or thought, is yet less out of proportion with them than the unfathomable depths of God's own holiness, surely this is no robbery of God, no trenching upon His indisputable rights, no sign of any low appreciation of those rights. Whatever praise I lavish on the varied and interlaced splendour of one pencil of the sun's rays is surely not any disparagement of the sun in which it is born and whence it travels to this earth!

Holy, then, was Mary at the moment of her Conception, amongst creatures unmatched as yet, and never to be matched but by the holiness of her Son. And if to any the thought suggest itself that the Son could not be more holy than the Mother, that water of the derived spring could not be purer than the parent source, and that therefore the very argument for Mary's holiness lessens our ideas of Jesus, the answer is at hand and simple. Though she was to Him the channel of His earthly existence, yet that Holy Thing that was conceived in her was of the Holy Ghost. Mary's Son He truly was, but He was God's also. Though her pure blood was to spring up anew within His veins, yet the quickening power came straight from the first great Source of holiness. His blessed Soul sprang into existence at the Almighty fiat. And the union of that Soul and Body to the Person of the Word was an union independent of Mary's agency.

Oh, then, in this Month of Mary, let us busy ourselves in counting out, in analyzing the untold drops of holiness which she sheds around her all sparkling and pearl-like in the

beams of our holy faith! Do we pant after the fountain of living water, like the hart in the wilderness? Let us slake our thirst beside this well of Jacob, Holy Mary—holy with a holiness only less than God's, holy with a holiness the thought and contemplation of which will deepen and expand our conception of God's.

But the holiness of Mary immaculately conceived is only a starting-point. The river of her sanctity gathered strength as it rolled on through life to the ocean of divine love and happiness. Most especially was this the case when she became the Mother of God; when she stood by the tree of shame, strong in her holiness; when she daily received her Son again within her bosom in Holy Communion; when the Holy Ghost came down in fulness upon her at Pentecost; and lastly, when, having finished her course, she was translated to the heavenly kingdom. She began where even glorious Saints end. Her foundations were on the holy mountains. What tongue, then, of men or Angels can hope duly to sing her praises as she is now, when her course is ended? The world with all

its beauties is a revelation of God; it displays His character and unfolds the excellence of His various attributes. No philosopher, no theologian, no sacred poet, has yet penetrated into all the mysteries of outward creation. But Mary is a much greater and more intimate revelation of God to us than the world, unlocking to us secrets of which nature could tell us nothing, and picturing to us, with a light which we can better bear than the consuming brightness of God's face, the holiness of the most holy Trinity. Well, then, in the study of Mary we are engaged upon a higher and holier science than physical discovery or far-reaching speculation. If we want to know Mary, we must strive in our measure to be holy too. And how shall we better strive than by keeping close to her, dwelling this month really in her company? "With the holy thou shalt be holy,"* says Holy Writ. If we carry the thought of Mary at all times about with us, we shall be ashamed to do that which displeases her. If we cling to the skirts of her garment, virtue will pass out of them. For be assured of this, that Mary is not more a

* Psalm xvii.

partaker in the holiness of God than in His unselfishness. She, the neck, longs to pass on into the members of Christ that holiness which streams through her from the head, like the vibration of so many brain-sprung nerves in every portion of the human system. "Of her fulness we all have received." Through her we have already been sanctified in part. "Let then the holy become more holy still." Let us often beg of her to obtain of God that the good work begun in us may be carried on unto the perfect day.

HOLY MARY, PRAY FOR US.

Sancta Dei Genitrix.

WE have been looking on Mary's holiness till our eyes were dazzled and our brain dizzy with wonder, but if we consider the reason of her holiness, we shall transfer our wonder from her holiness to her maternity. We call on her to-day as the "Holy Mother of God." It is not surprising that the Mother of God should be holy; but oh, wonder of wonders is it that the Eternal, the Self-Existing, should have any Mother at all, and then, new marvel indeed, that she should be a woman, a daughter of Adam and Eve! The Incarnation is a very universe of wonders! Where shall we begin? Or, when we have begun, where leave off? Let us, then, pick out to-day one single subject from this many-sided mystery. It is this—The Incarnation of the Eternal Word was not accomplished without the consent of Mary. Jesus did not come into the world without her. She was no mere appendage or ornament in the solemn

ritual of the Incarnation. She was an integral part of the plan of our redemption. The Word would not become Incarnate without her consent. That we are able to adore the God-Man is therefore owing to her consent. That we can kneel in this chapel and have Jesus with us by His presence in the Blessed Sacrament is therefore owing to her consent, for the Blessed Sacrament is a daily renewal of the Incarnation —a renewal which could not have been taken place had she not consented to that of which it is the renewal.

Now let us draw two lessons from this fact.

First. That God would not become Man without Mary is a sign that He will not act in the Church without her—that He always works in the Church by her, and never without her. His own road into this world to us lay through her; our road from this world to Him lies also through her. Mary must introduce us to Jesus. Hence devotion to Mary should begin with our earliest days; so, and not otherwise, will there be any security of finding Jesus as we grow up. A childhood devotion to Mary will be sure to ripen into a manhood conformable to

Christ. That this inference from the fact of her consent to the Incarnation is correct, let a few instances out of many in history convince us.

When St. John the Baptist was to be sanctified, it was through her that the grace came. When the shepherds came to worship the Infant in Bethlehem, our Lady stood as guardian by the manger side. The Eastern Kings found Him on Mary's lap, and all they learnt about Him was from her. Our Lord's first miracle was wrought at her request. To her He recommended His disciples, in the person of St. John. To her care He committed the Church for years after His departure. On her sole evidence rested our first knowledge of the Incarnation. Her presence and prayers hastened the down-coming of the Holy Ghost. "In dogma the doctrine about Mary has ever been the shield of the doctrine about Jesus, containing it as she once contained Himself." In ritual they are never separated. And in devotion, which of us cannot testify, that the more we have known and loved her, the more we have known and loved Him?

If, then, we want our Lord to go on working in our souls, if we have any appetite for grace,

let us become beggars at Mary's feet, and throw ourselves upon her motherly power and influence.

Secondly. There is yet another lesson which we may draw from the fact of our Lady's consent being required for the Incarnation.

Our Lord once said that those who do His will are to Him sisters, brothers, *mothers.* He was once made Man actually in the womb of Mary. But He has many mystical Incarnations. The Blessed Sacrament, for instance, is a renewal of the Incarnation. The prerogative of Mary has in a manner become the privilege of every Priest. Beneath the consecrator's hands the Humanity of our Lord really takes a new mode of existence. But more than this, and more practically for us, we too—weak, insignificant as we are—may each of us become Christ's mother. He begins to dwell within us as soon as our career of sanctification commences. Whether in the unconscious infant by the momentary washing of Baptism, or in the adult reconciled by the grace of contrition, the life of Jesus begins within us. The death of sin is the life of grace. Now this work in the conscious individual is accomplished in the will. Our

consent is necessary to it. "He Who made us," says St. Austin, "without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves." Our salvation is dependent on our will quite as much as the Incarnation was dependent on the will of our Blessed Lady. As she then said, "Be it done unto me according to Thy word," we too must cry out to God, "My heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready." And if we have reason to believe that Jesus does live within us, we must anxiously hasten the day of His spiritual birth, Our good resolutions must pass forth into action. and Jesus may then be said to have been perfectly formed in us and to be born in us. What then is wanted in order to raise us to this glorious dignity? Just one thing—will, hearty cooperation with the will of God. There may be pangs to be endured, violent as the pains of a woman in travail, but the joy of our hearts when the hour has come will make us forget the preceding pain. Something of this we all of us have felt after making a good confession, when all had seemed painful and gloomy in prospect. But its fulness will be brought home to our souls when, for the multitude of our children—our

good resolutions put into execution—we shall be enabled to speak boldly with our enemies in the gate. That gate is death, and we shall in death be fearless of the devil's mockery if we have consented to the conception of Christ within us, and, by an energetic will and the assistance of the Mother of God, had strength to bring Christ forth spiritually by good works. O Mary, Mother of God, obtain for us this grace, that we also may become spiritual mothers of the King of kings—that we may be able to cry out with the Apostle, "Now I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me!" Thou hast the unselfishness of Him in Whose holiness thou hast so largely partaken. Without thee God would not become Man; without thee He will not be born spiritually of us. Oh, then, grudge not thy help to us, that that life of Christ which has been begun in us may be perfected, and that we may not fall into the wretchedness of those of whom it was said—"The children are come to the birth, but the mother has not strength to bring forth."

HOLY MOTHER OF GOD, PRAY FOR US.

Sancta Virgo Virginum.

To live according to reason, to be master of all our animal desires, to lead in this corruptible flesh an incorruptible life, to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, to be unspotted in soul and body, to remain a temple perpetually dedicated to God, to retain unsoiled and undefiled the image of God within us, this is that virginity which SS. Chrysostom, Nazianzen, Basil, and Ambrose, and so many other Saints, have so lavishly praised; this is to wear that special beauty, dignity, and blessedness, which Holy Scripture ascribes to the "chaste generation," and to win for ever in heaven the virgin's aureola, or special crown. This is that gift which our Blessed Lady had, even before her Annunciation, in a more eminent degree than any other of the spotless band, and which, after she had become the Mother of God, was enhanced and perfected above all measure, so that we rightly call her the Virgin of virgins.

O precious gift of virginity, easily lost, and once lost never to be regained, thou art very beautiful, much to be desired, most watchfully to be guarded, most sedulously to be cultivated, most strenuously to be defended! How shall we preserve thy delicate bloom from destruction?

There is only one way, that, namely, which the Virgin of virgins took; *humility* is its only safeguard;—humility, without which virginity itself would not be pleasing to God. "Virginity," says St. Austin, "is a great good in the Saints of God, and most watchfully to be guarded, lest it be corrupted by pride." And St. Bernard says the same in yet bolder words: "Virginity is praiseworthy, but humility is indispensable. The one is a matter of counsel, the other of command. Without humility, I am bold enough to say, that even Mary's virginity would not have pleased the Lord."

Think over some of the instances of Mary's humility.

She is suspected by St. Joseph; a word would have cleared her from all imputation, and have won the veneration of the Saint. But she is silent.

She is praised by an Angel; and is troubled at his saying.

She is chosen to be, and is, the Mother of God; and she says, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord."

She breaks forth into a canticle of joy; but it is her own lowliness that she commemorates.

She gives birth to the King of kings. Where, but in a stable?

She is bidden by St. Joseph to arise and to fly into Egypt; and she obeys on the instant without a question.

She lives in obscure poverty, and loves it.

Her Son is put to a shameful death, and before the assembled nations she stands beneath the Cross. The cup of humiliation which He drains, she shares, and eagerly. And when the second strange Annunciation is made to her, that she who is the Mother of God is appointed Mother to a race of penitent sinners, without repugnance, or rather with quicker promptitude, she inwardly utters her *Ecce, ancilla Domini; fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*—"Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to Thy word."

Never was virginity like hers, because never was humility like hers.

Let us, dear scholars, be wise in time, and learn of her how to keep the frail treasure of virginity secure.

Far from thinking highly of ourselves, demanding or courting praise, let us shun honour, and love to be hidden and unknown; let us choose subjection rather than command; let us be silent under suspicion, and receive correction, even when unjust, with submissiveness; nay, let us strive by obedience, by prayer, by self-restraint, to obtain the great grace, which we are so unripe for yet, of copying our dearest Mother in her thirst for humiliation. Thus, and thus only, each of us according to the measure of grace given to him, can we hope by walking along the secure path of humility to carry safe across this rude, wilderness world the priceless treasure of virginity.

HOLY VIRGIN OF VIRGINS, PRAY FOR US.

Mater Christi

"IF the first-fruit be holy, the mass also is holy." "From their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" These are the words of an inspired Apostle and of our Lord Himself.

Now, my dear scholars, may we not apply this reasoning to our Blessed Lady? What was her first-fruit? She bore the Eternal Wisdom. Is she not then that created wisdom in whom "is all the grace of the Way and the Truth"? We can set no bounds to the holiness of her who was the Mother of the Holiest. Whatever the Omnipotent could work in the finite, was wrought in her. She was as worthy of her Son, as creature can be worthy of the Creator. Grace had in her "its perfect work." In some other favoured ones grace had begun to operate before birth; but in her case it ran up to the very first moment of her being, outstripped the imputation of sin, and was beforehand with the usurpation of Satan.

All this follows simply, as a matter of fitness, from her Maternity. It could not congruously be otherwise. But this is God's side only in the work; and we should lose half of the practical fruit to be gained from the consideration of Mary's holiness, if we did not examine her side of the work also.

Well, then, incomprehensibly great though the grace bestowed upon her was, it did not shut out her cooperation. Mary, the Mother of Christ, was on her trial; she, as we, could have chosen the worst part; she was not beautiful and glorious by a necessary law of her being. Her first grace was indeed altogether independent of her: but her second grace was gained by her use of the first. If she had not been at liberty to reject grace, she could not have merited by its increase. For the power of meriting evil is inseparable from the power of meriting good, and is great in proportion to the good with which we have been visited. Thus, then, at five years old she had merited what she had not merited at her birth, and at thirteen what she had not merited at five. Yes, such had been her correspondence with grace, so diligently had she

traded with her talents at thirteen, that it became fitting that she should be raised to the dignity of Mother of God. Not that she could claim, any more than she did in fact look forward to, this dignity; but such was actually the return which God deemed fitting to make her for her saintliness. And this at thirteen! Oh, weigh this fact well—she was only thirteen at the date of the Annunciation.

Some of us have long past that age, some of us have not yet reached it: well, where were we or where are we likely to be at that age? Has the day of grace risen in our souls? Yes, we have had graces. But what has become of them? Have they been used or trifled with? Have we been awake and in earnest, or have we been slumbering and dreamt away our opportunities? If the Sun of Justice has risen upon us with healing in His wings, how comes it that our souls are still in a dim twilight, and our affections still unwarmed? How is it that the rays of God's grace come to us shorn of so much light and heat? Alas, alas! we have spread the mist of sin around our consciences. Unheeded it has steamed up from our heart's soil, and now

it has gathered into a thick fog and weighs gloomily and oppressively on our souls.

Yet it need not have been so. We were free, and are now free, blessed be God, to use the graces which He bestows upon us. Whence, then, comes our folly? Doubtless it comes from our not having thought sufficiently of God and of ourselves. We have not weighed the importance of the trust confided to us. Suppose a sum of money were put into your hands, and that you were told that it was in your power and was your duty to manage the deposit with diligence and care. Suppose you knew that by such care it would infallibly accumulate beyond all your expectations. What exertions you would make to profit by your privilege! Would you plead youth as an excuse for folding your hands and sitting in idleness? Ah, no! Then do not put forward your youth in justification of your neglect of grace. One grace is of infinitely greater worth than all the wealth of this world: and graces more than you can number have been lavished upon you. Had you turned them all to account, how rich would you have been! You can form no idea of the liberality which God

would have shown in His rewards. Sorrow, then, over your past thoughtlessness, and, shaking off your sloth, set your hands in earnest to the work. Keep your eyes open to see the graces of God as they come, that you may know the time of your visitation and seize upon the privileges of the hour. And as you need help from on high for this exertion, call upon Mary, by her holy childhood, by that cooperation with grace by which she merited to be chosen Mother of Christ at thirteen years of age, to obtain for you the steady energy of a soul that is all for God, that you may not lose one, no not one, of the precious graces of your boyhood.

MOTHER OF CHRIST, PRAY FOR US.

Mater Divinae Gratiae.

IT was quiet *midnight.* The unconscious stars were drifting across the sky, the lily was sleeping in its closed vase, and no other sound broke upon the stillness but the baying of a watch-dog here and there, attending upon the herdsmen of Nazareth. Even then did the Almighty Word of God go forth, and in the little room at Nazareth that night in March the most adorable mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished. In a moment, when Mary had spoken her "fiat," swiftly as lightning but noiselessly as the falling dew, the Holy Ghost had formed the Body of Jesus from Mary's blood, and the Soul of Jesus had sprung from nothing and animated that Body, and both had been assumed by the Person of the Eternal Word; Jesus Christ was one Person with two Natures, and Mary, more a virgin than ever, was yet the Mother of the Eternal God.

Morning rose on the earth, cold, clear, and

vernal, and the Redeemer long looked for by mankind had come unto His own. "Where sin abounded, grace did yet more abound." The earth, water-logged and sinking with iniquity, was once again buoyed up by the freight of grace which unconsciously it carried.

But though the world knew not, Mary did know. Well, then, how did she act upon that knowledge? Did she keep the precious gift jealously to herself? "My secret to myself." What God had wrought in seclusion and in the night-time it was not for her to blazon forth in the broad light of day. Well she knew that the Holy Ghost would reveal the mystery in His own good time, and what that time was she knew also. But joy lent wings to her feet, the activity of grace constrained her. In her there was no sin for it to cast out, but, though yet unborn, sin was to feel the weight of the Conqueror's arm. While yet shrouded in the womb, that Divine Grace of which she was the Mother began its sin-hating apostolate.

Look at her, then, as she overcomes her love of seclusion, and goes with haste into the hill country of Judea. Picture to yourselves the

bright bands of attendant Angels, guarding her from harm, and forming a joyful escort to her Son in this His first mission of conquest. At last she comes to the end of her journey. The Baptist lies there as yet unborn, but, like the rest of Adam's children, bound fast in the chains of original sin. Yet a moment and the work is done. Mary has no sooner brought her heavenly burden nigh to where he is than the bonds of the unborn child are broken. The Baptist leaps with the exultation of newly-acquired freedom; he worships, with the abounding gladness of his sinless soul, the Author of all grace thus brought to him by Mary.

Ponder upon this, gaze upon the Baptist in all the glory of his grace-robed soul. He is already a burning and a shining light. He is already rich in heavenly gifts, already a hero and a Saint. Realize all this as the result of Mary's coming, and you will see how full of meaning is the title, Mother of Divine Grace.

And now turn to another scene. It is the middle of the solemn sacrifice of the Mass. There is a tingling stillness in the church. Every head is bowed, every sound hushed, as

the Faithful expect the coming of their Lord. Five little words did Mary utter, and the Incarnation was a fact; five little words does the Priest pronounce in lowly whisper, and what *was* bread *is* God. It is the March night in Nazareth all over again. It is the Incarnation brought home to our believing hearts. But this is not all. The mystery of the Visitation has its place in the Mass also. Think you that it is not a joy to Mary very like that which she felt at the Annunciation, when her Son and our Redeemer in a manner repeats the mystery of that night? And think you that her joy fails at those blessed moments to produce the like effects?

Could you see her, you would observe her in haste to bring her Son to you. She would have you from her hands receive the grace-infusing fruit of her womb. She would make your heart leap within you for joy at the presence of your Lord. She would hang your soul all over with the beautiful and precious ornaments of grace. Oh, yes! she has a greater interest in your welfare than you have yourself, and if your Communions be cold and fruitless, be sure it is not for lack of her bestirring herself in your behalf. Why, though you were running swift of

foot to your damnation, her love would still outstrip you; she would still long to arrest you before it was too late, and to show you the blessed fruit of her womb—Jesus. Be sure, then, that when, by a good confession, you have obtained the charter of your freedom, and exchanged the devil's thraldom for her sweet service, there is nothing which she will not do for you—no grace, which she, the Mother of Divine Grace and your Mother also, will not urge her Son to bestow.

Put, then, your Communions under her protection; receive our Lord's holy Body at her hands. Ask her to obtain for you at that moment whatever grace you want. Do not be afraid to open your mouth wide; she will fill it. And if you are not going actually to communicate, at least make a spiritual communion in the same manner—you will not repent it. Make trial of her now in this month of hers. At all times, in all necessities, call upon her as the Mother of Divine Grace, but then especially when you are about to receive Him Who is the centre and source of every kind of grace.

MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE, PRAY FOR US.

Mater Purissima.

FATHER AURIEMMA of the Society of Jesus tells us that there was a young man, a Sodalist of our Lady, at Messina, who, though he had been a faithful servant to Mary, yet was once in great peril of losing his purity. He was tempted to evil by a person whom the devil had urged thus to attack his virtue. Good as he was, the temptation was not without its force. Sorely pressed—brought indeed to the very verge of sin—he called on Mary. "Mother most Pure," cried he, "help me; desert me not in the hour of my need." At once that woman, whose beauty had well-nigh proved his ruin, appeared to him as she really was in her soul. She seemed a monster, a fury from the bottomless pit. Inclination turned into disgust; admiration gave way to alarm and horror. He was a disenchanted man. He had escaped from the snare, regained his courage, and came victorious out of a struggle in which so many are unhappily lost.

Such is the efficacy of calling upon our Lady by this title. Such is the invocation which you are recommended to make as often as you pass the statue in the gallery—*Ave, Maria Purissima.* If you form the habit of so addressing her even when not tempted, the words will rise naturally to your lips when you find yourselves attacked. Your weapon will be ready to your hand in the moment of surprise.

But why is Mary so especially moved by this invocation? The answer is obvious. It reminds her at once of that hatred of sin which entitled her to be called *Purissima.* Her purity was not a mere passive endowment, an ornament of her soul; it was an energetic, unwearying, life-long, eternal hatred of sin. "I will put *enmity* between thee and the woman." "She shall *crush* thy head." Here is hatred of sin passing forth into action and successful efforts for its destruction. Ah! Mary looked at sin with other eyes than we do. The deceitful tinsel of pleasure had no spell for her: no outward charm could impose upon her, enlightened as she was to know the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

But what was truth for her is truth also for us.

Would we but consent to have our eyes opened we should shrink from sin instead of hugging it, as we do, to our bosoms.

Think a moment. Have you sinned? Alas! what then have you done? You have strained your utmost to cut off God from His creation; you have strangled His life in your soul. You have turned your back upon your Creator, your Father, your Redeemer, your God, your All. You are but a young schoolboy, an insignificant unit among men, yet your puny arm has been raised and your infant fist clenched against the Almighty. You have presumed to menace and defy Him in Whom you live and move and have your being; Him Who holds you in His hands, and could in an instant crush you, and fling you, like so much worthless paper, into the fire to burn. Gone are all His favours, you are no longer His child, you have cancelled the merits of the past, forfeited heaven, sold yourself into slavery, purchased a place in hell.

Will you remain thus? Do you forget who is your enemy? Who is your Father? You walk about, you sleep, talk, laugh, you go to schools, you are praised for diligence, you make the

rewards of talent yours, yet God has but to leave you for an instant and you are dead, and lost for ever; and will you every instant provoke Him to this vengeance? What greater blindness could there be than such false security?

But you say you have good hopes that you are not in sin; that the past has been forgiven. Yet, even so, you are not safe: you are always in danger of falling. There is at all times but a hair's breadth between us and mortal sin. St. Philip Neri after years and years of heroic sanctity could yet cry out each morning to his Lord—"Have a care of me, O my Jesus, or I shall deny and betray Thee this day!" The Angels fell in heaven, Adam sinned in Paradise, Judas and Peter in the school of Christ. Are you Angels? Have you been created in original justice? Are you Apostles? Were you all or any of these, you might in a moment become demons. A temptation a little stronger than usual, an unexpected encounter, might bring you to ruin in the time of unguardedness. Remember this, and tremble; remember this, and learn to be always on your guard; remember this, and seek ever more and more to hate sin,

to wage active war upon your deadly enemy, to give your treacherous passions no quarter; and while seeking to copy her, to call with great confidence and constancy upon Mary most Pure to crush within you the very beginning of evil.

MARY MOST PURE, PRAY FOR US.

Mater Castissima.

As *chastity* is a habit of self-restraint in the matter of one class of unlawful passions, and as *abstemiousness* is a habit of self-restraint in the matter of unlawful gratification of the palate, both these virtues are species referable to some more general and comprehensive virtue. This is no other than the cardinal virtue of *temperance*, that virtue whose special attribute is comeliness (*decor*) or beauty, and whose opposite always entails disgrace or ugliness (*turpitudinem*), and therefore shame.

Now, it would have been impossible that our Lady should deserve the title *Castissima*, had she not possessed this cardinal virtue in the highest degree. We have, also, another way of knowing this of Mary. For she was conceived immaculate—that is, from the first instant of her being she was clothed with original justice. That supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit, which until the Fall enabled man

on the one hand to obey God, and on the other to rule his own passions, and keep them in rigid submission to, and perfect harmony with, that reason against which they now rebel, and which they suspend while they energize — that supernatural gift, I say, was always hers.

Mary, then, in her whole being, soul and body, with all their powers, faculties, and functions, was a whole, harmonious kingdom in which everything, every act and movement, however apparently trifling, was in perfect order. Not only were the highest acts of her intellect and will perfect in themselves, and in perfect concord with the blessed will of God, but when she walked, or spoke, or ate, or moved hand, foot, or eye, these little acts, each one of them, though many thousands in a day, were under perfect control, and were done at the bidding of that reasonable will which was their appointed ruler. Had it not been so, see what would follow. We should be obliged to admit that there could be jarring and collision between one part of Mary's nature and another, that that most orderly realm could be thrown into confusion

by discord and rebellion. A thought from which, as Catholics, we instinctively recoil.

All this, and much more, is implied when we address our Lady as *Mater Castissima.* Without it the title would not be hers. It must, then, be our endeavour, if we would copy Mary in her chastity, to obtain the mastery of ourselves, not in this one point alone, but in the widest sense in which the cardinal virtue of temperance can be taken. Rebellion we know is a very contagious thing. If we are not masters of ourselves in eating and drinking, if we cannot control our eyes and make them look as our reasonably informed will dictates, if the tongue acknowledges no master, but gives utterance to every word which arises to it, so that we often say what afterwards we have to wish unsaid, or if when reason tells us it ought to be silent it will have its own way, and talk to the first person we meet, if our limbs assume at pleasure any position which laziness or restlessness suggest, it is quite clear that we are not masters in our own homes. And we have therefore no small reason to fear the rebellion of our worst and most dangerous passions as soon as the occasion

offers itself. Nay, they will most certainly rebel against us, not now perhaps, but when we are less surrounded by safeguards, and we shall be brought to a hand to hand fight with enemies, to be conquered by whom is *death*, the death of our very souls.

This is why now, while we are yet boys at school, we should prize, and do our utmost religiously to obey, all those rules of punctuality, order, silence, submission, and respect, which are ordained to no other end, but gradually and easily to train the wildness of our sin-disordered nature into such habits of self-control as will help us, perhaps, even to avoid all direct conflicts with worse passions, and if not, at least speedily and easily to put down the internal rebel when he does rise insurgent against reason.

Oh! how easy a work is this! It is so distributed, so parcelled out into small portions, that it requires no unnatural strain, nor inflicts at any moment much suffering upon us. It is as if we had to take some medicinal gas, and instead of being obliged to take it with great inconvenience at one terrible dose, it were diffused through the air we breathe in such a

way that almost imperceptibly we took it, and it did us all the good without any of the danger.

So little, so easy an effort to conquer ourselves in small things, that hereafter we may gain the victory in severer and more dangerous conflicts, surely we cannot refuse to God when we reflect that it is really the only way in which we may hope to attain the virtue of temperance in its widest sense, and so to become in our measure like to her, who, for her possession of it in the highest degree, has an indisputable right to the title of *Mater Castissima.*

MOTHER MOST CHASTE, PRAY FOR US.

Mater Inviolata.

OUTSIDE St. Peter's Church at Douay there used to stand an image of our Lady. One day while some devout persons were at their prayers before it, a troop of giddy boys came and began a noisy and distracting game close by. The image raised its arm as if to strike them for their disrespect. They saw the strange movement in alarm. Seized with terror, they ran to tell their parents. Many soon came to the spot, and eight long days of prayer were passed before the image to make reparation to the insulted Mother. Of course her kind heart forgave them ; and many were the miracles she thenceforth wrought through this particular image.

Does Mary, then, really make so much of a little thoughtlessness, an unintentional irreverence, and that though the offenders be mere children? Well, then, it is clear that she and we are not of one mind ; that we do not look at

sin from the same point of view as our Mother, the Undefiled.

It would have killed Mary to have seen one spot upon her soul's robe. Was this over-sensitiveness; did she form exaggerated views? We dare not say so. It remains for us to conform our ideas of good and evil, of great and small, to those of her who is all fair and in whom there is no spot. We have to persuade ourselves that venial sins are not what we have hitherto taken them for, insignificant trifles. Let us, then, look at God and at His grace, for there is the true standard of our ideas.

A venial sin displeases God. Mortal sin is sin with a double action; it turns away from God, it turns towards creatures. But venial sin turns towards creatures without turning away from God. It is a remissness of our love of God, a growing cold of charity, an impeding of the free and vigorous action of grace. Now, though all this can take place without turning away from God, yet is it a small thing to act with wilful ingratitude towards a God so great, a Father so good, a Spouse so loving? You would not think the ruin of the world a trifle.

Suppose this planet on which we stand lay before you a blackened cinder, thrones, kingdoms, buildings, life of all kinds swept away and blasted to destruction; would you turn away on your heel, and laugh at this as at an amusing trifle? Smaller catastrophes than this have made heroes pale and the knees of strong men knock together. Yet add to the ruin of the earth that also of the whole material universe, of those countless myriads of worlds, vaster far, and haply more nobly peopled than this earth; and this would be a less evil than one venial sin. God's glory would not be impaired by the former, it does suffer by the latter. His fatherly Heart cannot but be grieved when He sees His sons wish to do Him disservice. It must be pained at the evident contempt of a child, who at every turn, on the weakest pretences, without any dissatisfaction with self, without a thought of amendment, snatches at an opportunity of disobeying Him. Such a soul, if there were no hell, if it could rid itself of the fear of eternal torments, would find little difficulty in committing mortal sin, for it is clear that it cares little for God and His honour.

Then see again the bearing of venial sin upon grace. One while grace, created grace, that beautiful work of uncreated Grace, which is God, comes upon the soul as an impulse of the divine will, various in its strength as in its beauty, but itself an actual, thrilling, exciting, fortifying touch of Heaven. This is actual grace. Another while it comes as a permanent state, endowed with supernatural sanctifying habits, rich in virtues, making us the friends of God, and, in St. Peter's words, giving us a participation of the Divine Nature. This we term habitual or sanctifying grace. Both of these are supernatural gifts, workings of God, similar in the supernatural order to the works of creation and preservation in the natural. They are going on at all hours all the world over. They are, as it were, the omnipresence of God's attribute of mercy. Then—oh! think of it—by our venial sins we are ever interfering with these sweet, these incomparable operations of our God; with habitual grace, by cooling down its blessed fervours; with actual, by sheer resistance, by shutting our ears to its promptings, by freezing its inward voices into silence. Day after

day actual graces fall over our souls thicker than the globes of dew upon a clear autumnal morning, and we by our venial sins brush them ruthlessly away. A deliberate lie, a wilful disrespect to superiors, an outbreak of passion unresisted, a little indulged vanity; in fact, any one of the multiplied ways in which we may offend is able to, and essentially does, disturb the supernatural workings of God. Is it any wonder then that Mary, the Undefiled, should look upon no sin as little, and should urge her children, sometimes even by a show of severity, to renounce all deliberate sin, and really to reckon it as a foul ingratitude, which bites with keener tooth than the winter's wind, and freezes the heart harder than the bitter sky that warps the waters? Oh, then, by frequent reflection bring yourselves to think as Mary; and at least never to excuse yourselves for sin past, or encourage yourselves to sin in future by saying, "It is but a small thing—a mere venial sin."

MOTHER INVIOLATE, PRAY FOR US.

Mater Intemerata.

IT was not enough that Mary should have been conceived without sin, nor that the paradise of her heart should throughout life be preserved from the entrance of moral evil. This most perfect creature was to be the temple in which the Godhead was to come and dwell bodily, to be the Mother of God, and therefore He Who built this temple for Himself wonderfully, and adorned it yet more wonderfully, and consecrated it specially to Himself, would not allow the least breath of any sullying influence to come near her, or leave so much as a tarnished spot upon the very surface of her being. Even sin's shadow, which is imperfection, was never for a moment to rest upon her. Not even the first beginning of a movement, impulse, tendency, or bias towards, I will not say what was wrong, but what was less perfect, had ever any place in Mary. It would have been a jar and a shock to the harmony that was to subsist between her

and God. It would have distorted in her the image and reflection of those divine perfections of which she was to be the unruffled and stainless mirror.

Perfection, you must remember, has two aspects, its positive and negative side. Positively, it is the presence of everything that can give finish and completeness to the truth and beauty of any being. Negatively, it is the absence of all that can mar or hinder or disturb that finish and completeness. The perfection of holiness consists positively in absolute conformity to the holy will of God, that unfathomable ocean of truth, beauty, and sanctity. It consists negatively in what has just been described, viz., in utter freedom from, and horror of, whatever clashes with the all-holy will of God, or is contrary to it, or even by any possibility tends to want of harmony with it. The latter is but a necessary consequence of the former, or more exactly, it is the same thing as perfect holiness, only looked at in its negative aspect. In God Himself infinite hatred of sin is precisely this negative side of His infinite moral rectitude and holiness. Love of goodness and

hatred of moral evil are one and the same perfection. It is not by a free or arbitrary choice that God condemns sin, but it is by the very love with which He must love His own infinite perfections that He necessarily abhors and detests sin infinitely and eternally.

This is a great truth, and fertile in consequences. Hold it fast, and, be it remarked in passing, your faith in the never ending punishment of sin will be proof against all the shallow arguments of modern unbelievers against the existence and unending duration of hell.

Again, in the light of this truth we see how it is that an act of true contrition, perfect in kind, instantly reconciles the penitent soul to God, and justifies the sinner, for it is nothing less than a supernatural sharing in the divine hatred of sin, and this implies a supernatural cleaving with the whole heart to God.

But these thoughts by the way. The practical lesson to be learnt from all that has been said is, that the true test of our progress towards God, Who for all of us is the one great end of our existence, Whom we are by the fact of our creation bound to tend towards, is our growth

in horror and detestation of sin. Some people judge of their own condition by the presence or absence of sensible sweetness and delight in their religious exercises. Some by the varying phenomena of temptation. Others by the ease or difficulty they find in prayer, and especially in mental prayer. Others, by their more or less sensible perception of the grace of the sacraments. Others by the conquest or non-conquest of a besetting fault. But one and all of these signs are untrustworthy, and sure to deceive us in the long run. There is not one of them that is not calculated to produce in our souls one or other of those two banes of the spiritual life, presumption or discouragement, the first of which is the parent of pride, and the second the shadow of despair. But the only true measure is the aversion of our will from sin. But you will ask how we may know this. Are there any probable signs of this growing detestation of sin? Yes. If you are discontented with your present state; if you are making continually fresh starts and renewing your struggle with sin; if you are definitely attacking some vice or defect in yourself; if your desires of

progress through self-conquest and sorrow for sin towards God are growing, and you are faithfully acting up to those desires, you may hope that God is drawing you nearer to Himself, and that you are in some measure, and upon the whole, corresponding with grace, and that your will is more and more set against sin.

In this glorious struggle may you ever have the help of your Mother, Mary the Undefiled!

MOTHER UNDEFILED, PRAY FOR US.

Mater Amabilis.

HE would be a strange Catholic child who could imagine anything terrible or severe about our Blessed Lady. Everything we are told about her from our earliest years is full of tenderness and affection. We all learn to treat with her as with a most amiable Mother. The little pictures of her which we cherish represent her as very amiable. Her statues strike us at once with the idea that she has a motherly and affectionate heart, and, consequently, that she is very amiable. The modesty of her demeanour, her downcast eyes, her joined hands, her mouth, never opened but to utter words of peace and salvation, of prayer, pardon and blessing—these all speak to our hearts with a sweetness which allays all storms and brightens all prospects. And yet the handiwork cannot equal the glorious archetype, which is visible only to the mental eye. Painting and sculpture are not adequate to the task of embodying in a tangible

shape the glorious visions, the radiant forms, the glimpses of the heavenly reality, which fill the imagination when purified and exalted by devotion. The sentence of imperfection is unconsciously inscribed upon all the works by which we try to represent the unearthly and the invisible. Though the hand of a master may have made the marble almost to move before our eyes, or the painting to start into life from the canvas, outward representations must ever fall infinitely short of that conception which, though itself not perfect, has yet been formed with higher truthfulness in devout minds. What must be the amiability of that inward picture which Saints carry about with them of this most loving and beloved Mother! What the ecstasy of Angels and blessed spirits as they contemplate without medium the very person of their dearest Queen! *They* need no pictures or statues to stimulate their devotion or inform their minds. But for *us*, the hall of whose imagination is so easily hung, when left vacant of holy pictures, with representations of things earthly, frivolous, or profane, external and visible objects of devotion have a very

especial use. They may but poorly figure forth the heavenly being whom they represent, yet they teach the ignorant and the dull lessons easily learnt and with difficulty forgotten. The eye is a ready student, and retentive. It might then be thought that once to have seen an image of Mary was enough. And truly the impression then made is never, perhaps, wholly effaced. But repeated inspection even of one model will reveal new truths, and where models are various the lessons will be proportionately multipled. As an organ, then, of instruction, if that were all, devotional pictures or images of our Lady are by no means to be despised.

But, further than this, they have a work to do upon the memory. Because seldom recalled to mind, truths known are often of little more advantage to us than those we do not know. True in worldly knowledge, this is a fact far more strikingly so in spiritual. Our attention is so engrossed by the petty, passing events of this life that we have little time left for remembering the mysteries or Persons more immediately connected with the next. Hence the frightful preponderance too

often given, in our estimation of their value, to the temporal over the eternal. Anything, then, which acts upon the memory in a contrary direction is good. If left without visible reminders, who knows whether we should ever wake out of forgetfulness? But every time we see an image of Mary, the thought of her is almost necessarily renewed, and this, meeting with the real—though possibly dormant—principles of faith in our souls, stimulates them to a fresh and healthy activity. Nor does the process thus begun end here. Hope and encouragement tread close upon the heels of faith, and love comes to crown the holy work. For how is it possible for a heart with any grace in it to believe in our Lady's power and amiability without being moved to confidence and love? And, besides all this, such works of art are in themselves expressions of affection. What but the attractiveness of the work is there to make the painting of the Madonna so thoroughly a Catholic artist's favourite choice? Nor are we to imagine that devout designers are so foolish as to enter upon their task of love without previously studying in prayerful

meditation the heavenly original. Such men as Van Eyck and Fra Angelico used to receive Holy Communion before venturing to depict the lovely majesty of the Madonna.

Upon all these grounds, then, be it ours to multiply pictures and images of Mary. It has always been the instinct of truly Catholic hearts. Every palace, every cottage, every street in Catholic countries, attests this fact. And doubtless here in England, the propagation of images, pictures, medals, rosaries, and scapulars, is one very effectual means of teaching our ignorant and dull Protestant neighbours to know our amiable Mother, of quickening the memory of her in forgetful—and therefore lukewarm—or sinful Catholics, and at once of testifying our own love, and kindling the same in the hearts of others, towards her whom we delight to call, in the words of the Litany, *Mater Amabilis.*

AMIABLE MOTHER, PRAY FOR US.

Mater Admirabilis.

WE often call this an age of wonders. As we pierce deeper into the hidden secrets of nature, the marvellous effects of her mighty forces multiply before our eyes. Discoveries upon discoveries keep us in a continual state of *admiration.* Amongst them none perhaps more effectually astonish than the wonders of gravitation and electricity. As they are laid before us we are stimulated to a desire of knowledge; we long to trace them to their causes, to see whether they are harmonious or antagonistic in their workings, whether they proceed from the same, similar, or contrary agents. In fact, we see great effects and have not yet come to know their causes.

The activity into which this throws our faculties is excessively pleasant. All wonderful things are more or less pleasurable, because the mere desire of knowing is a pleasure, and the comparisons which that desire urges us to in-

stitute are operations in which our minds take a natural and peculiar delight.

But, after all, those men take but a sorry and contracted view of the wonders of creation who never rise in thought beyond this material universe. In the world of spirits there are wonders far more astounding, a search into which, to say nothing about its pleasantness, is far more profitable. "Some men," says St. Augustine, "abandoning virtue, and not knowing what God is, nor the majesty of His nature, which lasts for ever unchangeable, think it a great thing if they make this material mass, which we call the universe, the object of their most curious and eager research. Hence arises within them a pride so great that they seem to themselves to dwell in that Heaven about which they often dispute." This is the danger of physical science—indeed, its certain fruit, unless the prurience of our desires be allayed by their subservience to their true end, the knowledge of God Himself. *Scientia inflat*, was an inspired dictum of St. Paul's, and the experience of every age is a testimony to its truth. Of course curiosity *may* pervert our minds even

when searching into spiritual things. Still the chances are less, and the ease of directing such studies aright far greater. This is true of all sacred knowledge, but in an especial manner of the knowledge of Mary, for as when on earth the sight of her drew men not so much to herself as to God, so now the knowledge of her, and of that which is wonderful in her, of itself raises the heart and mind of the student of God.

Perhaps, however, daily conversation with her, the frequent use of her name, and the familiarity of the thought of your Mother inclines you to question whether the title admirable or wonderful is fully suited to her. You prefer calling her by more endearing names. Do so by all means; yet lest your love should lose that tincture of fear which keeps it from passing into presumption, it will be well to awe yourself into reverence by looking sometimes at the wonderful side of her mysteries.

Your devout imagination, as you say your rosary, may call up before you a beautiful image of your Mother. You may look into her gentle blue eyes, and fancy to yourself the sweet smile upon her lips, and hide your face in the folds of

her mantle, but have you entered into the wonders of her heart? "The daughter of Sion is all beautiful within." What passed in Mary's soul, and the exquisite wondrousness of her exalted affections, will furnish forth matter for an eternity of contemplation. It is no easy task to paint a single joy or grief which she felt, but when they come to be put all together, there is no limner skilled enough to express them, much less to depict the workings of God within her in the mysteries of her Maternity. From the Incarnation to the Assumption all is ineffable, all inconceivable. We can only bow down our heads and worship; we can only long to look upon her with the light to be given us in the beatific vision, though even then no word will be found to express the result upon us but this same word, *wonder, admiration.* And that wonder, will it not be a cause of joy, an impulse ever fresh to adore Him Who by the Holy Ghost is called Wonderful, and to cry out, *Domine, Dominus noster, quam admirabile est Nomen Tuum in universa terra?*

One, and that no small benefit, which we shall gain by intertaining these feelings now

will be, that brought thus to stand beside God, and watch with reverence His brightest workings in the order of grace, we shall be drawn off from the engrossing search into physical marvels. Earth will grow insipid when we have tasted the joys of heavenly study, and if duty lays us under the necessity of acquiring worldly sciences, we shall approach them in an humble spirit, with a heart prepared to refer everything to God—in a word, with those dispositions which alone can keep knowledge from puffing us up, and so from being our ruin. We may become great scholars, or scientific men, but we shall know our place, and not arrogate for worldly knowledge an importance which is not really its due. We shall always be submissive to the faith, and ready to acknowledge the claims of revealed truth as paramount to all science, and so escape the dangers of false science, which alone is opposed to revelation.

Admiration, moreover, is the mother of hope, and hope the mainspring of energy. Those who find matter for delighted wonder in Mary, cannot but hope to dive one day into the abyss of her

perfections, and as such a happiness is impossible to any but pure, humble, and loving souls, they apply themselves ever to increase in purity, humility, and love. These, then, are some of the reasons why it is well for you thoughtfully and frequently to pray to Mary by her title, *Mater Admirabilis.*

ADMIRABLE MOTHER, PRAY FOR US.

Mater Creatoris.

THIS is a startling title. The Creator of all things must Himself be increate. Can He, then, have had a Mother? Well may St. Peter Damian exclaim :—"What tongue is not struck dumb and what mind is not stupefied at the bare thought that the Creator is born of a creature?" *Quia Creator oritur ex creatura; Factor fit ex factura.* Yet it is the truth, true as He is true, for from His lips we know it. He Whom the heavens of heaven cannot contain, was conceived in the Virgin's womb, from her received the flesh which He by becoming Man assumed, reposed for nine months in that narrow home, and afterwards nestled in her bosom, and from her breast drew the nourishment by which He grew from infancy to boyhood. Looking, then, merely at what we may call the material side of Mary's Motherhood, it is clear that she did more for our salvation than all other creatures together. The Prophets announced

the coming of the Creator as our Saviour; the Angels heralded His birth; the holy Forerunner pointed Him out to the world; the Apostles and Evangelists made Him known to all people; the Ministers of the Church preach His word and administer His sacraments through all ages; but Mary gave Him of her own substance that very flesh which is our life, that very blood which redeemed the world.

Such is the Motherhood of Mary considered as a *material* fact. The Creator, Who is in all else by essence, power, and presence, is in Mary by identity, as being one and the same thing with her, as a fruit is one and the same thing with its parent tree. At this let all creation be silent and tremble; for who can venture to gaze upon the vastness of such a dignity?*

But more stupendous and bewidering still is this Motherhood viewed as a *moral* fact. It confers on her the highest rank amongst creatures and lifts her to the borders of divinity, securing for her a right and title to a worship above that which may be given to any Saint or Angel, short only of what is due to God. We honour

* St. Peter Damian, *Serm. in Nativ. Virg.*

specially the great mother of the Machabees because she gave to the world seven brave and heroic martyrs. And we do well. For, by the witness of the Holy Ghost, she truly is *Supra modum mater mirabilis et bonorum memoria digna.** If she had been the mother of all martyrs, confessors, doctors, virgins who have ever adorned the Church, I suppose no one would dispute her claim to a still higher honour. Yet she would not even on that supposition be worthy to be Mary's handmaid. I say, then, that all praises fall short of Mary's dignity, and that the boldest theologian is but a timid stammerer in his attempts to syllable her greatness.

And as her honour, so her power, her dominion over the Creator, for Mary had God for her subject by the right of motherhood. Her sweet will, the desire of her heart, unexpressed by her humility lest it should seem a command, rules the divine Heart of the Creator, Who is her Child, becomes "the time-piece of the divine decrees," the regulator of His loving dispensations towards the children of men. At her *fiat*

* 2 Mach. vii. 20.

God the Creator becomes Man; her visit to Elizabeth is the signal for the sanctification of the Precursor; she puts herself in adoration, and He is born; she admits the shepherds and the Wise Men to worship Him; at her word He is circumcised; on her appeal He quits the Temple where He was on His Father's business; subjection to her sums up all the course of His many years of hidden life; with her leave He enters on His public ministry; at her mere suggestion He works His first miracle; she assists at the dread Mass of blood, and as St. Vincent Ferrer says, at the moment of accomplishing the Sacrifice of the Cross, to her He bows His head; and, lastly, she hastened the hour of the Resurrection. These are facts which prove to us, with all the force of repeated revelation, the power of Mary as Mother of the Creator, the power God gave her over Himself. If they do not prove it, we have been deceived, persistently deceived by God Himself. We cannot, you see, without blasphemy detract anything from the power of Mary.

Whilst we thank her, then, for having by her Motherhood done more for us than any other

creature could do, whilst we worship her with awe for her unspeakable dignity, whilst we glory in her sublime honour, let us also not fail in all our wants to open our hearts to her with unbounded confidence in her power.

MOTHER OF OUR CREATOR, PRAY FOR US.

Mater Salvatoris.

THE dearest of all names to us is that of Jesus, God our Saviour. The most endearing title, then, of her who next to Him is dearest to our hearts is this—Mother of Jesus, Mother of our Saviour. These are statements which need no proof. Yet it is well to ask ourselves why these holy names are so dear to us. Not that the reason is far to seek, but for the value of the thoughts which the answer suggests. The reason, then, lies in our deepest, most lasting, most universal need, to which Jesus, and He alone, does or can offer relief. What is that need? The love and friendship of God, without which no heart can be at rest. Sin has deprived us all of that, and like a tyrant who keeps his captives fettered and imprisoned as slaves, detains us far from our home in God, far from light, far from grace and peace. More than that even, sin puts enmity between God and our souls, for God would not be God, the

infinitely holy, if He did not hate sin; sin also leaves our poor souls helpless, because it leaves them dead. But the name of Jesus reminds us that He, God made Man for us, has paid down the price of an infinitely costly ransom for us, from the bondage and death of sin; that He by His voluntary death upon the Cross reconciles God and man again; that His precious Blood applied to our souls brings us pardon, life, grace, freedom, peace, union with God. The name of Jesus, then, is full of sweetness as the symbol of all this; of the sweetness of reconciliation, renewal, consolation, and defence; of the sweetness of grace, which is the light, the vital heat, strength, freedom of our souls. It reminds us of all we are without Him, and all we obtain through Him. Without Him we perish and are lost for ever; through Him we obtain salvation, which is life and joy eternal with God our Heavenly Father. This is why the Holy Name of Jesus, *i.e.*, God our Saviour, is so dear to us.

And next we know Who gave Him to us. God the Father gave us His only Son, but He gave Him through Mary—Jesus is the blessed fruit of her womb. She is His Mother. She is

His Mother by her own free consent. She entered into the loving designs of God for our redemption; she gave of the substance of her body to form a body for Him; He was dependent upon her for His human life and early growth. To her He owed all that by which He could suffer and be a victim for our salvation. And when the dark hour came, and His dying frame hung all bleeding for us on the Cross, she, the Mother of our Saviour, did not withdraw her consent, but stood beside the Cross to the last, firm in her will to give Him up for us all. And so it was that Jesus, dying, said to all those who by His death were to become His brethren and sons of God, "Behold your Mother." Oh, how dear, inexpressibly dear to us is this Mother of love and grief! How sweet her title of Mother of our Saviour!

But there is one fear, and it is lest you should love her too little. Not that the young are not capable of love. Oh, yes, your hearts are tender and fresh, and if you will only let your Mother take possession of them for God, you will find all sweetness and happiness through her. Happiest those who have earliest known and earliest

loved, and having loved, never forget or fall away from Mary, the Mother of our Saviour. But boyhood is too often thoughtless, giddy, carried away by the senses and the imagination. The pleasures of the world are new to boys, and very attractive; their natural life is so young and vigorous, and full of buoyant hope and brilliant prospects; they are so easily allured by the tempting brightness of sensual enjoyment or worldly ambition; they feel so strong and self-helpful, and ready to do and dare all things; the animal part of them, with its appetites, is so strong and exacting; that they are in great danger of forgetting or making light of their spiritual needs, of lulling their conscience to sleep, of resting in the affairs of their souls and their souls' salvation on their own strength, as if they could keep themselves good easily enough, or make progress in virtue simply by their own efforts, or raise themselves when they fall, or be perverse when they like, and penitent and good again when they like. These are the falsehoods which the devil whispers most assiduously in the ears of youth. Listen to them, and you will find out by bitter experience how weak

and helpless and miserable our nature is without Jesus; how there is no depth of degradation too deep, no slavery too oppressive to be the lot of those who will not from their earliest days take deeply to heart the sense of their own utter need of a Saviour.

Oh, then, pray ever earnestly to Mary, His Mother, to show you your need, and to show you your only helper, the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus.

' MOTHER OF OUR SAVIOUR, PRAY FOR US.

Virgo Prudentissima.

"THE way of the wicked is darksome. They know not whither they are rushing."* "Let thine eyes look straight on, and let thine eyelids go before thy steps." †

From these and many similar passages in Scripture we learn what is sometimes, especially to the young, a startling lesson. The Holy Spirit tells us that rashness and inconsiderateness are sins—that it is a duty to be cautious, thoughtful, wary. Wickedness and imprudence are synonyms. We can never act at random without incurring guilt. So deeply impressed with this truth was St. Ignatius that nothing figures so conspicuously in his Exercises as the principle of deliberation, in order to direct every act, inward and outward, to the great end for which we were made. And really, if we look over those pages of the history of our own conscience which we have already written in such

* Prov. iv. 19. † Prov. iv. 25.

black characters, I doubt not that we shall be able to see that a little thought would have saved us from much misery. Enough, surely, has already befallen us to disenchant us with the luxury of acting at random. Mere natural impulse of will or passion, whenever it has borne us to immediate action, has scored sin against us. Many a bodily action which might have been performed without damage to our consciences, had we but descended to it from the high ground of reason by the slow but secure progress of deliberation, has, by our headlong rashness, shaken our poor soul's life very nearly out of it. Half the spiritual cripples who crowd the highways and bye-lanes of the Church owe their unsightly and enfeebling deformity to falls consequent upon rashness.

There are precipices on either side of our path, often a fog thickening the atmosphere around us, violent winds not unfrequently threatening to take us off our feet, and obstacles lying in our way, a collision with which would well-nigh crush us; and with all this we are under the obligation of making head towards our journey's end.

Weary work, you say, dull and weary, weary and dull! Had we only ourselves to depend upon; were we our own blind guides, it would be weary work indeed, and worse than weary, absolutely fatal. There is no scrambling unassisted past the pits of hell. Straight though it be, the road to Heaven has many a giddy height, many a hazardous descent. Ordinary prudence, then, would bid us ask a guide. God be praised, whoever asks obtains. And oh! how sure a guide, Mary most Prudent, the very pattern of holy wariness, of heedful circumspection, of inward ponderings! Mary, whose first act of reason in her mother's womb was to unite herself to the Principle of all true prudence by an act of adoring love; Mary, whose foresight led her to consecrate her virginity to God at three years of age; Mary, whose caution held her in suspense at the Angel's word; Mary, whose circumspection sealed her lips, when a word might have relieved her from the pain of her beloved husband's suspicions; Mary, whose staid deliberation, and wonderful reserve, in her public communications with our Lord in His ministry, were so remarkable; Mary, who, in the

extremity of her grief, could stand beside the Cross without one sign of extravagance, one gesture of impatience, one single look even which was not, with perfect consciousness and choice, dedicated to God's greater glory. No elevation, however sudden or high, no joy, however transporting, no grief, however distracting, had power to move Mary from the exquisite balance and harmony of her well-ordered interior. Such is Mary, and such, therefore, is our guide, *Virgo Prudentissima*. But the very fact that she is given us for a guide implies some effort on our part to follow in her footsteps. There is no such thing as travelling to Heaven lapped in the luxury of a well-stuffed and springy carriage. It is all mountain climbing, all work for hand and foot and eye, for steady hands and stout hearts. Mary's example, Mary's encouragement, and Mary's intercession will lighten the difficulties of the road, but it is not God's will that they should be completely removed.

This is why it is so necessary for us all, but especially in our younger days, when passion is strong and reason weak, to guard against the

craving after *stunning* enjoyment. There is no harm in fun. It is far less dangerous than melancholy. But when the devil cannot draw us into the latter, he stimulates the spirit of fun in us, till we take fun, pleasure, enjoyment to be our standards of excellence. This once established, it is his aim to make us look for fun in the exciting delirium of vice. He makes us promise ourselves a great deal more pleasure in vice than it can in fact give. He puts it into our heads that those who check us are *slow*, and that because they do not care for pleasure, they like to keep others from enjoying themselves. Under this impression, we give no credit to warnings, though the utterance often of a bitter experience. Because lawlessness has decked herself out in such poetry and jollity of character, we resolve but to bide our time, and when the routine and the irksome slavery of schoolboy days are over, to have our fling, and make up with vigour for past restraint.

To prevent our entering on so fatal a career, the most prudent Guide would have us now habitually regard pleasure as subordinate to duty. She would have us act rightly, not upon

a principle of coercion, but because we are bent upon using our free-will for good at the very outset. Which if we do, duty will soon become a pleasure, and our service of God and of our Lady a labour of love rather than of fear; and because we have studied in this life to copy the most prudent of Virgins, we shall, on the threshold of the next, be rejoiced to hear ourselves approved by God as prudent and faithful servants.

VIRGIN MOST PRUDENT, PRAY FOR US.

Virgo Veneranda.

THE chief feature, doubtless, of all genuine devotion to our Blessed Lady is intense love. When we think of her all other feelings seem to be swallowed up in this. But somehow or other from impetuosity of character or levity, or some other defect, our love is not always of the right kind. It is apt even to degenerate into familiarity, and so in speaking of her or to her we forget our proper place and attitude, and take unwarrantable liberties with her. It will not be amiss, then, to reflect for a few moments upon the religious respect, reverence and veneration, which is her due, and to see how essential a part it is of perfect love of Mary.

At first sight veneration seems to imply fear, and therefore to be a restraint put upon love. But this mistake comes from our confounding two kinds of fear. The fear with which we are best acquainted is fear of evil; as, for instance, of punishment, or disgrace, or privation of what-

ever kind. This fear is slavish, and does not stand with perfect love. But there is another fear, which is caused by the excellence of some good. Thus we feel a sense of quiet awe in the presence of a very holy and venerable man, which does not make us love him the less, or in any way terrify us, lest by offending him we should excite his anger against us, but which simply by esteem for his excellence and superiority restrains us from impertinence, or petulance, or frivolity, or any other unbecoming act or posture in his presence. This is filial fear, and is not in any way opposed to the deepest and most heartfelt love. This fear dwelling in the soul, and regulating its attitude towards God, is a gift of the Holy Ghost, and found most fully in those souls which love God most. Never was it so intense as in the Soul of Jesus towards His Heavenly Father, and in its due proportion He exhibited this filial fear or reverence towards His Blessed Mother. Nay, even now in heaven, by a sort of regal condescension, He pays her, as His Mother, all respect. The attitude of Sonship towards her He has never, and will never, put off. This is what we mean to imply

when we address to Mary those astonishing words, "Mother, command your Son." Not that we ascribe to Mary any preposterous power, but only that the veneration formed as a habit in the mind of our Lord whilst upon earth, has not forsaken Him in heaven, and that in some way past our comprehension He may still be truly said to venerate His Mother. "*So* even amongst men *Princes and Prelates* frequently exhibit marks of honour and reverence to their own *subjects*, and to men who are their inferiors, which signs we ought not off-hand to count as put on or unreal, but as coming from true internal submission, such as may, in the sense above explained, be found even in the greatest Princes."* Yet who will dare to say that this habit does not coexist in the Heart of Jesus with incomprehensible love? Another instance of this kind of veneration we see in the Archangel Gabriel when he announced the Incarnation to our Blessed Lady. The instinct of the Faithful has led them in pictures to represent him kneeling to deliver his message, an attitude which could not be false, but intended to signify

* Lugo, *De Incarn.*, disp. xxxv., v. fin.

the internal veneration with which he regarded her.

Now, if such reverence was not, as it could not be, misplaced in them, what amount of it can be unbecoming in us? When we reflect on their example, to the height of which we can never reach, and when we think of Mary's dignity, her excellence, her inconceivable wisdom and sublimest sanctity, we cannot help feeling the incongruity of any other posture of soul or body in her presence than that of child-like submissiveness, and unqualified veneration. True love towards one who is our superior, whether in office or intrinsic qualities, always knows its own place, never outsteps the bounds of respectful reverence, or ventures to take the least unbecoming liberty. The moment that love degenerates into familiarity, it is clear that we have lost that esteem and appreciation of superior excellence, which is the foundation of well-ordered love. The child that is petulant, or inattentive, or frivolous, or assuming in its behaviour towards its mother, exhibits not the exuberance, but the defectiveness of its love towards her.

Let us keep this always in mind then, whether we speak *of* Mary or *to* her; let love give warmth and colour to our veneration, and let reverence intensify, while it regulates and testifies, our love.

VENERABLE VIRGIN, PRAY FOR US.

Virgo Praedicanda.

"OUT of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." We need no long experience of men and manners to know that this is indeed the case. Without going into the world outside, where the politician, the tradesman, the man of books or of science, the farmer, the mechanic, are all talking chiefly on the subjects which respectively engross their thoughts, we have but to listen a few minutes to the conversation of the various knots of our schoolfellows during recreation times in this little college-world to guess pretty accurately what is uppermost in their thoughts. Here are some in earnest debate about the games, there are others full of the prospects of vacation and of home, a third set are debating over again the questions of the schools, a fourth comparing notes on their various chances of prizes or distinction, while some soar to topics of wider interest, such as

agitate the minds of their elders with unending discussions upon national or party politics, the army and navy, travel, history, literature, art, and occasionally even science. Strangely indeed would one day's list of subjects, if registered on paper, read. Much of course would fall under the head of merely casual remarks from which no inference could be drawn; but one thing would probably strike a thoughtful mind, that there is a great deal of lasting work done amid all this Babel of half-formed opinions, shrewd guesses, early prejudices, and dissimilar aspirations. Fleeting as words seem, and in many respects are, yet they are continually settling, like the winged seeds of various plants, upon some soil or other, there one day to sprout and grow when perhaps the place or occasion of their first birth is forgotten.

But what has this to do with our Lady? Much, very much to our present purpose. The scholar whose heart is full of the love of Mary, who has been careful to store up in his memory the wonderful things he has heard of her, who in devotion to her has recognized the value of the treasure he possesses, will surely obey by

instinct the unfailing law of conversation, and out of the abundance of *his* heart his mouth will sometimes speak. In the first place, and without restraint, he will pour forth his feelings at the foot of the altar or before her own dear statue; but surely he will not always be tongue-tied, not always dumb in her praise when with his companions. Monopoly and exclusive privilege have no place in Mary's kingdom. What we have freely received she expects us freely to give. We are not to keep all our devotion to ourselves. Without affectation, without singularity, yet also without fear or shame, she would have us show zeal in the promotion of her interests and her honour.

To Sodalists especially does this remark apply. In the very first common rule of the Sodality are these emphatic words: *Par est, ut sæpius inter se agentes, mutuo se ad ejus amorem et cultum studeant impellere, et ardentem quamdam in suis animis excitare cupiditatem sanctissimi illius nominis extollendi*—"It is fitting that, by frequent communication among themselves, they should endeavour to urge one another to her love and worship, and to excite in one another's

hearts an ardent desire of extolling her most holy name." All Sodalists who are true to their engagements are preachers of Mary; first and chiefly by their modest and pious behaviour; secondly, and in no small degree, by speaking her praises among their companions. Such was the spirit of Anna, the prophetess, who, after she had seen our Lord in the Temple, continually spoke of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Israel. Such was the spirit, developed in another and very courageous way, of those noble Roman ladies, who, as St. Jerome tells us, for love of Mary left their homes and country, their palaces and grandeur, to live and die unknown in the places where our Blessed Lady had dwelt. A more simple, and often a most effectual way, of preaching Mary, is by a few devout words dropped naturally and in good season. Eloquence is not necessary, nor fine thoughts; heartiness is all that is required. St. Philip Neri, with his simple "Be devout to Mary," became an illustrious apostle of her devotion. And why should not we? To love Mary and to make others love her is a sublime and consoling apostleship, the joy, the

master-passion, the heaven on earth, of a truly Christian heart. It is a work which the Almighty has not thought beneath Himself. For what else but preaching Mary shall we call those miracles by which His omnipotence so frequently signalizes her protection. Out of the abundance of His all-loving Heart He speaks. Nor by miracles *only*. Through His Prophets ages before her birth He celebrated her praises; and when the fulness of time had come, and His chosen Apostles were sent out into every corner of the earth, He spoke again through them, *Jesus, natus ex Maria Virgine.* You see that God would not let them leave out Mary even in that shortest compendium of the faith, the Apostles' Creed. And who again but He has taught the Saints to say such glorious things of Mary? Or where did the Angels learn those hymns which, as the *Regina Cœli,* have passed from the mouth of the Church triumphant to that of the Church militant? And louder still than ever in these our days has God spoken. The jubilant cry, which so lately ran through Christendom at the decree defining the Immaculate Conception, was but the echo from the

hearts of the faithful of the voice of God speaking in Mary's praise through the infallible instrumentality of Rome.

How great then the privilege of publishing Mary's honour! of doing the same work with God! Privilege, indeed, even were there no further recompense. But if our Lord reckons every honour done for His sake to one of the least among His brethren, as done unto Himself; what may we not expect for promoting the glory of His Mother!

"He that honoureth his mother," says the Holy Spirit, "heapeth up treasure."* Temporal blessings are annexed to the honour given to those who are our mothers in the order of nature; and shall we for an instant wrong our Blessed Lord by doubting that eternal happiness and glory is a treasure stored up for those who spread devotion towards Mary, our Mother in the order of grace?

Let it not be said, then, that works of nature and of art, that nations, parties, and individual great men, nay, oftentimes unworthy persons and views, have their enthusiastic admirers, or

* Ecclus. iii. v.

zealous promoters, while Mary, the *Virgo Prædicanda*, wants clients, out of the abundance of whose hearts her praises may be spoken and her devotion spread.

RENOWNED VIRGIN, PRAY FOR US.

Virgo Potens.

THERE are other titles of Mary more endearing, but few, if any, more encouraging than this.

However great her love, however sublime her holiness, however wonderful her own personal privileges may be, our confidence in her patronage would be small did we not believe her power to be equal to her will.

Testimony to this power in Holy Scripture is not wanting, from the chapter in Genesis where it is promised that she shall crush the serpent's head, to the vision in the Apocalypse which represents her clothed with the sun, and the moon beneath her feet.

Not only is she terrible as an army in battle array to our malignant enemies, but she possesses such power with God as an advocate, that her influence with Him resembles dictation rather than prayer. She has more the air of a Queen than of a subject. The Lamb, Whom other Virgins follow, was seen at Nazareth following

her, and her suit on behalf of the perplexed host at Cana was privileged to obtain a miraculous intervention, though our Lord expressly said that His hour for working miracles was not yet come.

And in Heaven what is the meaning of her coronation by the Blessed Trinity, if not that she is made Empress of the universe? Has God given her a queenly crown without the just prerogatives of a Queen? That crown is a crown of power, in right of which she possessed, after Christ, absolute power over all creatures in heaven and on earth. God has crowned her with glory and honour, and has set her over the works of His hands. Oh, joy for us that we have a Mother of such greatness in heaven, that we have such prevailing interest in the King's Court! Surely it is no devotional extravagance to salute her not merely as *Virgo Potens*, but as *Virgo Omnipotens*. Yes, we have the authority of Saints and Doctors for it, that Mary is omnipotent. Her Son, omnipotent by nature, has made her omnipotent by grace. He has bound Himself to grant her request, and so become, to use the language of St. Bernardine of Sienna,

Himself a subject of her empire—*Omnia Mariæ famulantur, etiam Deus.* As then this power is ever exerting itself against our enemies, and in our behalf, he is not a faithful client of Mary who, faint at heart, does not rest in her patronage with an assured confidence. That confidence, doubtless, you possess. Let us then pass to another lesson which we may learn from Mary's power.

Had any one asked a Jew in the days of Mary who was the most powerful person in Palestine, there can be no doubt that he would have received for answer, "Herod the King, or Pilate, the representative of Roman authority." None would have thought of looking for the seat of empire at the despised village of Nazareth; the wise men of the day would have treated the idea as preposterous. If such a notion had been broached, and had any one thought it worth while to argue in refutation, he would have pointed to the ensigns of regal or imperial dignity, he would have run through the narrative of conquests, he would have appealed to numberless edicts and decrees, he would have pointed the finger of scorn at the carpenter's

family travelling at the word of Cæsar with all the appearance of forced submission, and attended by all the inconveniences of excessive poverty, to enroll themselves his subjects at Bethlehem. Fearlessly would he have defied the world to gainsay his statement. Triumphantly would he have cried that the very *face of things* confirmed his words beyond dispute.

Truly, the *face of things* did bear him out, and the face of things does bear out the world's notion of power now. The Tabernacle, with its speechless abasements, does not look like the centre of universal sway. Nothing but an effort of pure faith could bring us to believe that it is. "The sight of the eye and the hearing of the ear" would mislead us in this as in everything else. But God seeth not as man seeth; His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. He would have us conclude against appearances. He speaks to us inwardly to this effect: "Riches are not power, worldly rank and prosperity are not power, secular knowledge is not power; place no trust in Princes; fear not what man can do unto you; be not cheated into the desire of worldly empire;

Herod was weak, Augustus powerless; when man separates himself from Me, he is feebleness itself; Samson's strength failed when I was gone from him. The strong and the mighty, when set against Me, I hold in derision; the powers of this world, at My word are brought to nought. But I have chosen the weak things of the world to confound the strong. Innocence, purity, obedience, abasement, faith, hope, charity, these all are real powers. In a word, sanctity is power, for sanctity unites the creature unto Me, the only Strong, the Lord of all power and might." Mary, therefore, as the holiest of creatures, was united to God with an intimacy short only of the Hypostatic Union. If it was no empty boast for the Apostle to say that he could do all things through Christ strengthening him, to Mary His Queen, overshadowed as she was by Almighty power, must be ascribed all power in heaven and on earth next to her Almighty Son.

And we too, if we would be powerful with God, powerful over self, powerful against our spiritual enemies, strong to combat, like David against Goliath, must seek strength from on

high, must "become weak that we may be strong," must copy Mary in her holiness, that we may be partakers in her power. And copy her we can, if with full confidence we entreat her to exert her power for this effect, and with hearts distrustful of ourselves perpetually cry out—

POWERFUL VIRGIN, PRAY FOR US.

Virgo Clemens.

CICERO, in praising Cæsar, once said to him: *Nulla de virtutibus tuis nec admirabilior nec gratior misericordiâ est*—"Your mercifulness surpasses all your other virtues." Cicero was right in this estimate of virtues, for mercy is the highest ornament of power. For this reason mercy is assigned as an attribute of God; in showing mercy, we are told, His omnipotence is most displayed. In creatures mercy is not, indeed, the greatest of all virtues, for it is greater and better to be united to God, Who is above us, than to supply the wants and defects of those who are below us. Charity, therefore, towards God is Mary's highest and leading virtue, but among those which regard mankind her mercy undoubtedly holds the first place. Whether exercised for the relief of the needy or the reception of the penitent, it is her sovereign prerogative in regard to us. "The law of clemency is on her lips," the oil of mercy has

been poured upon her head. She is its crowned and anointed Queen. Hence we continually cry out to her, in the words of the antiphon, *Salve Regina, Mater Misericordiæ.*

Now what makes this title so dear to us? Whence its soothing effect upon our souls? Had we not been sinners, it would not tell upon us with half its present sweetness. It is because we know how greatly we stand in need of mercy that the utterance of these words makes us weep inward and silent tears, like those who are continually hearing good news and are hopeful. Sin, even when forgiven, does not leave us as it found us. Once committed, the fact of its commission always remains. When, therefore, we say, *Mater Misericordiæ,* we are but calling this bitter fact to mind, and, like loving children, begging forgiveness over and over again. When first we became penitents our sorrow had something of startled horror in it. It was impetuous, full of self-revenge, and caused, may be, an appetite for pain, which was more a nervous craving than a gracious and well-ordered hunger after justice. This sorrow was naturally transient. But to have lasting

value it ought to be followed up by a more quiet, but not less deep or less supernatural sorrow. Scripture never contemplates the dispositions of repentance ceasing. *Peccatum contra me est semper*, and *Amplius lava me*, were cries hourly in the mouth and always in the heart of penitent David. The bitter weeping of Peter, which first reconciled him to his injured Lord, was followed by continual tears, which ran gently over from the well-spring of love within his heart. We may well imagine how they gushed out anew whenever he looked upon Holy Mary, the Mother of that Divine Mercy which had pardoned him. The bitter had become sweet; the violent, calm. There was humility in those tears, not self-vexation; sorrow, not sadness, for sadness is sorrow with self in it. He was not melancholy, but hopeful; fear of hell was abated by love, a love of wonder at the compassion which could visit so much unworthiness. These were the abiding dispositions of St. Peter, and mark the consequences. How full of sap-like devotion was his after-life! How great his charitableness towards the fall of others! How constant his renewal of his good

resolutions! How completely destroyed his taste for the world and the world's enjoyments! How immovable his patience under crosses! How invincible his fortitude! How persevering his works of mercy! How noble his crowning sacrifice!

These were in him the fruits of abiding sorrow for sin. Something of these sentiments must be formed in our measure within us, for we, too, have sinned—we, too, have every need of mercy, and surely there can be found no more apt expression of such feeling than the oft-repeated words, *Virgo Clemens, Mater Misericordiæ.* But then the words must be real words, genuine speeches of the heart, or if as yet we have not entered deeply into their spirit, be it our endeavour henceforward to direct them to this end.

It is impossible to tell the wonders they can work if frequently and devoutly uttered. Especially when we are young, we are apt to look for happiness in levity, and to make the mistake of thinking that it is un-Catholic to take serious and religious views of things. But the Saints had other thoughts. In all of them is observa-

ble a mixture of gravity with cheerfulness. If early converted to God, we find them indifferent even to the games of boyhood, setting more store by a quarter of an hour's converse with Him in prayer than by any amusement whatsoever. Blessed Berchmans, though out of charity and to avoid being singular he used to join in his companions' games, yet never suffered himself to be betrayed into dissipation, or to be engrossed by any entertainment. He was not the less happy even in this life for this gravity and reserve, and, doubtless, if we sought more after the quiet, affectionate, humble, hopeful spirit of forgiven penitents, we should have no occasion to repent our choice. We should have chosen that better part which would not be taken from us.

Oh, let us try to learn our true place; let us remember we are sinners, forgiven indeed, but still standing in continual need of the motherly intervention of her whom we delight to honour as *Virgo Clemens, Mater Misericordiæ!*

MERCIFUL VIRGIN, PRAY FOR US.

Virgo Fidelis.

FAITH is a habit of the mind by which eternal life is begun in us, and which makes the understanding assent to truths not seen. It resides in the understanding, moved to assent by the will. It takes truth on the authority of God. Or, in the words of the Apostle, "It is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* When faith, by union with charity, becomes a living virtue, it is highly meritorious, and to it is annexed, for its elevation and perfection, the gift of understanding. This is nothing else than a light with which God floods the faithful soul, enabling it to penetrate mysteries beyond the reach of its natural light of reason. God does not leave His faithful servants in darkness: for by living faith we become followers of God, and He has said, *Qui sequitur me non ambulat in tenebris* —"He who followeth Me, walketh not in

* Heb. xi. 1.

darkness."* The gift, then, of understanding is the invariable attendant, though in various degrees, upon a living faith, *i.e.*, a faith informed by charity. By this gift, the soul possesses a sort of new sense, a spiritual sight; not, indeed, such a sight as to destroy or supersede faith, but that power of seeing which Jesus gave to the disciples at Emmaus. "The Lord opened their eyes, that they might understand the Scriptures." As long as we are here on our road to heaven, we cannot fully understand what comes directly under faith, but we may understand, and that fully, many things which bear upon faith and are in Holy Scripture, as the virginal conception, the life, sorrows, passion, and actions of our Lord there narrated: and we may obtain a more or less imperfect insight even into those truths which are directly of faith.

St. John and others saw our Lord crucified; faith was necessary to make them believe that *God* was crucified. The Blessed Virgin knew that she was at once Virgin and Mother, but it was by faith she held that she had brought

* St. John viii. 12.

forth the *God-Man.* What our Lady and St. John felt and saw, we have to believe. The gift of understanding enables us to penetrate those facts; and it further enlightens us upon that which was of faith for them also, although in this life it cannot give us a perfect insight into it, else faith were at an end. Now this gift of understanding was bestowed on Mary in its highest perfection, compatible with faith. To her may be applied, in a pre-eminent degree, the words of St. John, *Unctio ejus docet vos de omnibus.* Faith was to her an intimate and ever-present realization of the unseen: a life not in this world but hidden with Christ in God. Hence, the gift of understanding was the fruit of her faith, and passed out perfectly into the corresponding fruits of the Holy Spirit, which are certainty of faith in the understanding and joy ineffable in the will.

Here we see once more the principle of that intense purity of heart which has already so dazzled us. For what is impurity? In ordinary things, we call that impure which is mixed with some baser matter. We should not call silver impure because it had gold

mixed with it, for the gold would raise its value; but we should call it impure when alloyed by lead or tin, which are baser metals. Just so with the soul. Being a reasonable and immortal creature, it far surpasses in worth all bodily and temporal creatures. And hence, when it subjects itself to them and mixes itself with them by love of them, it is debased and becomes impure. But that impurity is cleansed by movement in the opposite direction. Let the soul move towards God, and it rises not only above earthly things, but above itself and all selfishness. Now the first, the indispensable, source and beginning of that movement is faith. Without faith the soul is plunged in impurity. With faith it gains an inward principle of motion, and is purified, even though faith be uninformed by charity, from the impurity and foulness of error; if faith be enlivened by charity, from the impurities of all mortal sin, and if faith be perfected by a formed charity, it is cleansed from every stain, and furbished into the unsullied brightness of absolute purity. Such were the effects of faith in Mary. Perfect in the virtue of

faith, perfect in the gift of understanding, she was brought so near to God, raised so far above everything that could possibly, even as by a passing breath, stain the brightness of the soul, that Angels even might be moved to envy.

On the other hand, and in contrast with Mary, with her faith, her understanding, her purity, how weak in faith, how dull of understanding, how stained in heart are we!

Blind, indeed, if we are not in the state of grace; for that man is spiritually blind who either wilfully shuts his eyes against the truths of salvation, as the Psalmist says, *Noluit intelligere, ut bene ageret,* or who, from being taken up with other things which he loves more, is turned away from looking at such truths: *Supercecidit ignis* (*sc.*, *concupiscentiæ*) *et non viderunt Solem.* Such blindness, I say, is incompatible with grace. But short of this is that dulness of spiritual vision which makes us see men as trees walking, *i.e.*, which hinders the distinctness of our perception, and leaves a confused picture of the unseen upon our minds. Hence the unattractiveness of divine mysteries

for our hearts. They are after all, though we believe them, a puzzle and a bewilderment to us. The picture of earthly beauty, as in the change of dissolving views, has not yet fully faded from the canvas; the outlines of the heavenly are just, and only just, struggling to succeed it. The result is a mass of almost inextricable confusion—a painful mixture of worldly maxims and unspiritual ideas with the principles of faith and the mysteries of the unseen. We, perhaps, sometimes make a feeble effort to see more distinctly, but each attempt ends in disappointment. With eyes aching from the strain, we turn away in disgust: at our next view the *old* outlines have grown more distinct, the *old* colours more glowing, till the danger of losing the last traces of faith becomes great indeed. What, then, are we to do? Oh, know we not that the light which *should* illustrate the picture, and bring out every shadowy outline into life-like brilliancy, that *should* make us gaze with delight on their harmonious proportions and fascinating lines, is in the hands of another? We have but to move Him to pour that light

into our souls, and the dulness of our spiritual eyesight will be cleared away: then the keenness of our faith, and the acuteness of our infused gift of understanding, will bring with them a corresponding purification of our hearts. And as there is no surer way of moving the Holy Spirit thus to enlighten and cleanse us than engaging Mary to intercede on our behalf, let us begin now constantly to invoke her for this most excellent intention by the title of *Faithful Virgin.*

FAITHFUL VIRGIN, PRAY FOR US.

Speculum Justitiae.

GOD is Justice itself. From all eternity His will has been to render unto all their due, and therefore to direct all things to His own honour and glory. Happy those of His creatures in whom this Justice is copied, happy in proportion to the fulness and brilliancy of the reflection. Those are "men of goodwill," men of desires, who earnestly seek to "prove what is the good and the acceptable and the perfect will of God." Our Lord has pronounced those "blessed who hunger and thirst after justice." They become true pictures of God. Their light so shines before men, that they glorify their Father Who is in Heaven. Yes, all the Saints are pictures of God; and Mary therefore, as the Queen of Saints, is, after Jesus, His most perfect picture, not traced, as some miraculous paintings, by the hand of Angels, but finished into a perfect and living likeness by the finger of God Himself. Look at Mary, then, and you

have God's word for it that you are looking at a faultless draught of His perfections, a very sun-picture of Himself. Now it is this faultlessness of the copy which entitles her to the name we are at present considering—Mirror of Justice. Now what is the use of a mirror? There are those who, making much of personal appearance, spend much time in the arrangement of their dress before the mirror. Do you, however, who are more anxious for the adjustment of the garment of grace about your souls, come to this spiritual mirror, in whose spotless surface you may behold not merely those stains, wrinkles, and deformities which make you unsightly in the eyes of God and His holy Angels, but that which will show you how to cleanse them all away. Though your innocence has not been such that you can boldly look up to Heaven and answer "Not guilty" to the arraignment of conscience, the possession of this priceless mirror will enable you to restore the beauty of tarnished virtue and brighten the image of God in your souls. In the pious study of Mary's life and the springs of Mary's actions, you will find the perfect model of a

Christian's life in every condition. In youth or age, in joy or sorrow, in honour or disgrace, we may all find in her our true rule and pattern.

Oh! when shall we learn to put away the puerilities of vanity, when convince ourselves that it is the mind that makes the body rich, that no meanness of outward form or worldly rank can touch true honour and true beauty? The sun breaks through the darkest clouds, and may not honour shine through rags? The painted skin of the adder does not raise him in our esteem: we shun him for his hidden venom. And, even so, no personal advantage, no adornment of dress, no prestige of rank can make up for corrupt morals and a deformed soul. Far, then, very far from us be the folly, the pitiable yet ridiculous folly of tricking out these poor bodies of ours in bravery not our own, and strutting forth in the face of Heaven with attitudes of absurd conceit, with a view to attract an admiration which we know is not our due, and which must move the Angels to laughter and God Himself to derision. What have we, worms of the earth, to do with vanity? What we are in God's sight, that we are in

reality; the praise of men cannot make us better, their contempt cannot lower us one degree. Away, then, with the delusions of self-love, away with all anxiety to attract notice, whether by our outward gifts or those endowments of talent in which we are so apt to take complaisance, and of which we are so ready to make a vain display. To avoid this fatal error, we must be careful not to contemplate our own excellence, whether natural or acquired. Self-love is very blind, and will direct our eyes always to our good points, while it throws a veil over our defects. Even Lucifer, with all his angelic wisdom, was duped by this lying picture of self. He lost himself in self-admiration, and fell into the abyss. And who can count the myriads of weak men who have lost their souls by similar delusions? They were our brethren, not less favoured by nature than ourselves—many of them immeasurably our superiors. Warned, then, by their errors, surely it is our wisdom to gaze out of ourselves upon that vision of truth, our Blessed Lady. She loved not vanity, nor sought after lies; but in the truth of her heart, and the full

consciousness of her nothingness, amidst the glories of her divine Maternity, had no other notion of herself than that expressed by her words to the Angel—*Ecce ancilla Domini.* We are told that those who fixed their eyes upon her during her sojourn here, were won by the sight to self-contempt and desire of imitating her virtues. A far more effectual spur to virtue and to all justice will the contemplation of her inward beauty be to us. But, then, as there were many who, not stopping to consider her, saw in her only the poor carpenter's wife and despised her for her outward lowliness, so now it is possible for us to look at her for a passing moment, and then to go our ways heedless of her attractions. St. James tells us of a man who, looking at himself in a glass, went away and soon forgot what manner of man he was. May God preserve us ever from such folly. May He give us grace not to content ourselves with passing glances, but by assiduous meditation on Mary's life and virtues to engrave on our hearts an indelible image of her which no worldly occupations, no distractions of daily life may ever force us to part with. Be sure

of this, that though mere looking at virtue, and constructing fine theories of conduct is an occupation hardening and deadening in the extreme, yet there is no surer road to perfection than humble meditation upon the mysteries and virtues of Mary with a view to practice. She has been given us by God as the Mirror of Justice with precisely this intent, that by gazing upon her we also in our measure may become bright mirrors of justice, and such images of God as He will not disdain to recognize when we stand before Him for judgment on the last day.

MIRROR OF JUSTICE, PRAY FOR US.

Sedes Sapientiae.

THERE is a wisdom which makes the outward goods of the earth its end. This wisdom is earthly. There is a wisdom which rests in the pleasures of the body. This wisdom is sensual. And there is a wisdom which looks merely to self-improvement—which directs all its efforts towards some excellence. This wisdom is devilish. For it is an imitation of the devil, who is king over all the sons of pride.

These are all foolishness with God. The wisdom which is from above, the gift of the Holy Ghost, knows only one first Cause, one only End—God Himself, the eternal and essential Wisdom. He who is wise with this wisdom makes God the standard of all his decisions, and directs all his actions purely towards Him. *Spiritualis homo judicat omnia.* Happy that man for he is at peace. The calmness of order reigns in his mind and heart. He is a true son of God, conformed to the image of Jesus, the

Incarnate Wisdom. Earth has no relish for him; God and the things of God alone are to his taste. He has gained a new spiritual sense. His soul is in full health. The bitterness of disease has passed from his palate. The animal man, which perceives not the things of God, is dead within him. The love which reigns within his will has taken all dulness from his understanding. He is man, once more set upright, restored to a more than earthly paradise, conversing intimately with the Father of Lights. Such is the wisdom of the Saints. Will this wisdom ever be ours? The greatness of the gift makes us tremble. Even so much as to hope and believe that some day we shall really possess it costs us an effort. Were an Angel to reveal to us a moment or hour when we should have reached this point, we should smile, not exactly with incredulity, but as Sara smiled when she was told that she should have a son. What God has to give us is so great that it seems too much. And yet St. Paul tells us, "All things are yours, whether it be the world or life or death or things present or things to come; for all are yours, and you are Christ's,

and Christ is God's."* Looking at the contrast with our present stupidity and want of relish for divine things, the possession of this wisdom is more than we can take in. Shall the blind and crawling worm hope for the wings of an eagle, or for more than the keenness of an eagle's vision, that it should soar into the heaven of heavens and gaze on God? The baldness of our petitions, the coldness of our words, our slovenly devotions, our ever-recurring distractions, the hardness of our hearts, tell us that there is too much earth in our composition for this, but then the words of God ring joyfully in our ears—"All things are yours." All things, and therefore this. Then, making bold, we say —"How shall this be done?" Where shall we seek this wisdom? And—oh, joy!—He Who has set us upon the search has also appointed us the means. In the midst of the Church, on the hill of Sion, He hath built a temple where He may be found. "Wisdom hath built herself a house." As of old in the temple built by the Wise Man, so now upon this house the glory of the Lord has come down and filled it. Mary may say, in the words of the Preacher, "'He Who

* 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

hath created me has rested in my tabernacle.' I, I am the temple of Wisdom."

In the building of this temple the sound of the hammer and chisel was not heard ; in the silence of eternity did Divine Wisdom design and construct it. When *we* are fashioned into temples of the Most High, rough work is wanted ; there is so much deformity to be reduced to shape, so many flaws in the material to be chipped away. But Mary came from her Maker's hands a finished temple. God could look upon her with complacence and say—"I have chosen and adopted and sanctified this house to establish My abode there: My eyes and My heart shall always be upon it."

As then, those true Israelites who sought after God had to go where He was present in His holy Temple, so now we, who really long for heavenly wisdom, must have recourse to Mary. To seek Him elsewhere would be to set up altars in Dan and Bethel, in places which He has not sanctified. Come, then, all ye who seek after wisdom, come to Mary. Little though you think it, if you have come to her, if you are one of her devout clients, with the grace of God

in your hearts, the gift is yours already—not in its fulness, but still it *is* yours. For "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

But perhaps as yet it is only a beginning. Though not actual rebels, we are not therefore of necessity the most affectionate and dutiful of children. Our loving Father does not turn us out of doors for anything short of downright insubordination, and so we are not outcasts. But the misery is that, while shocked at the utter forgetfulness of God in the world, and distressed at the hostility which men show to Him, yet we are often out of harmony with the principles by which the Divine Householder would have His family conduct themselves. Though it seems very obvious to say that God is the centre and the value of everything, and that nothing is worth anything except in so far as God chooses to have to do with it; that God's view of things can be the only true one, and that enlightened hearts respect nothing except under its relation to Him, yet even *we* find a difficulty in working these truths into our minds, and a still greater in acting upon them when received. This is why there is so much

time-serving, why we are so anxious to be on good terms with the world, and why on so many subjects we think it impertinent and narrow-minded to intrude religious considerations. Our prudence keeps God for grand occasions, and implicitly we feel that in some of our actions God would be out of place. What is the consequence? When those grand occasions do come—as, for instance, when we find ourselves under the necessity of considering what state of life we are to enter upon—the worldly wisdom which has been silently leavening our hearts makes itself suddenly felt, Heaven grant not so far as to frustrate our vocation, or lead us to deal even for a time in a paltry shuffling spirit with Him upon this important subject! For in such an affair any thought save of God and how we may serve Him best might be fatal. If, then, it be only to avoid such a risk, let us now study Mary and pray to Mary, as the Temple or Seat of Wisdom, who will assuredly teach us all wisdom and help us to unlearn all worldliness.

SEAT OF WISDOM, PRAY FOR US.

Causa nostrae Laetitiae.

IF we were right-minded we should have only one joy in life. It would be that joy to which the Apostle exhorts—"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." Were we simply creatures of God's hands this joy would be highly reasonable and imperative. How much more so then now, seeing that we are redeemed creatures, wretches raised from ruin, brands snatched from the burning!

We were rebels, convicts, slaves, and God the Father has given His only Son as our ransom. That Son has displayed His wisdom to the utmost in taking mortal flesh upon Him, to quicken by grace the flesh that was dead through sin. The Holy Spirit has given the clearest sign of His boundless love by bestowing an infinite gift on those who are infinitely unworthy of it. The negroes of the West Indies were intoxicated with joy when the news of their release reached them; it became the

absorbing topic of conversation; and, but for after-sorrows, would have shed joy around the remainder of their days. How much greater cause for joy then have we, who not only have been bought out of the most dismal bondage at the most costly price, but have with our freedom gained the privilege of adoption into the family of the great King of kings? Surely, all who are sincere and hearty in their gratitude to God find in the redemption of mankind, in its causes, its circumstances, and its results, their chief source of joy. The only thoroughly right-minded people are the Saints, and they have no other joy. This is their one sole, full, satisfying, unending delight. We are trying, each in his measure, to reach the same state, to make the joys of Jesus our joys, instead of taking delight, as we have done heretofore, in most vain things.

Now Mary, our most loving Mother, has a hand in every stage of that process by which we are being wrought into the likeness of her Son. Nor does she desert us here. She is the *Causa nostræ lætitiæ*, first, because she is so closely bound up with all the mysteries of redemption, that we cannot view them aright without her

being somewhere in the foreground of the picture. In other words, she cooperated with our Lord most constantly, most prominently, most effectually, in the work of our salvation, Her consent was necessary to the accomplishment of the Incarnation. The Passion itself was probably not undergone by Jesus without first asking her leave; and then, standing by the foot of the Cross, she suffered with Jesus all that the Mother of such a Son could suffer, and was there also bequeathed by Him to us. But she is the *Causa nostræ lætitiæ* also by the help which, if we ask her, she will give us in our efforts to regulate our joy aright. Her example, if studied, and her prayers, if implored, will go far, very far, towards reforming our theory of pleasure, towards changing our taste, and making us take joy in those things which at present we find dull, or tedious, or even positively repugnant and hateful.

But you will say, are we never to enjoy ourselves in anything else but what is directly pious and holy? No such thing. All things are good in their place. Recreation, fun, mirth, are sunshine, and a sort of sunshine which is

quite as necessary in proper time and place for the health of your souls as for that of your bodies. Gloom and sadness have no place in the Catholic system of training; for gloom and sadness are only less evils than sin itself. But then good things may be abused. Evil is always walking in the shadow of good. Healthful and innocent recreations may become neither healthful nor innocent by being carried to excess, or by our making too much of them, setting our hearts upon them, and not keeping them in that subordination in which they should be kept.

If you crave after what is sometimes called *stunning* enjoyment, if you let yourselves be carried away by those pleasures even which are in themselves harmless, if you neglect or put off duty because it hinders pleasure, if you make it a point always to seek the maximum of enjoyment, and to choose or reject just according to your natural likes or dislikes, then your joys are not such as our Blessed Lady approves of, or of which you ought to imagine she is the cause. But if you observe moderation in your pastimes, if you can make up your mind to sacrifice pleasure for duty's sake, or for the sake

of others, and especially for Mary's sake, or for God's sake; if you try to acquit yourselves of your duties of study, prayer, and obedience cheerfully, and ask Mary to fill your heart with true joys, and to keep you from overfondness for earthly joys, which at the best are trifling and short, then you will not in vain invoke Mary as the *Causa nostræ lætitiæ.*

CAUSE OF OUR JOY, PRAY FOR US.

Vas Spirituale.

IN biographies of the great men of the earth we almost invariably find very minute descriptions of their persons. Were such a portrait wanting we should complain of their incompleteness. This being the case, it may probably strike us as strange that the Holy Ghost has in the Gospel left no such record of His well-beloved Spouse. Prophets had used the most brilliant colours in painting her as the honour of her sex and the masterpiece of creation. But when she had come we search in vain for any allusion to the touching grace and dignity of her outward form. Perhaps nowhere else is the Holy Spirit so jealous of secrets, the knowledge of which would nevertheless have given us so much happiness. May we not then conclude that He was desirous of fixing our minds upon the fact, that all the beauty of the Daughter of Sion is from within? She was a vessel of perfumes doubly sealed, that

no particle of their virtue might be wasted. Her life was hid with Christ in God. The Divine Majesty was lavish of His honours, the Sacred Humanity burnt on, as it were, before her shrine, bowing its flame in respect towards her, yet all was silent and still. There was no movement in the depths of her lowliness unless to clasp the vessel of her perfections closer, like some delicate flower, fearing to be robbed of its sweet treasure. Oh, the depths of the abasements of Mary! Who shall fathom them? How wonderful an anticipation, how perfect a type of the silence and annihilations of the Host in the Tabernacle!

Was it that Mary knew not the dizzy height on which she stood? Were the prodigies of the Incarnation unappreciated by her? Or had the noble envoy of Heaven's will to announce his errand to unconscious ears? Far from it; but the knowledge of her dignity was the mainspring of her humility. *Ecce, ancilla Domini; fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.* She was too much taken up with her happiness to bestow a thought upon the holiness which disposed her for it. The Incarnation was in her eyes a

blessing, and simply a blessing; this was the only side upon which she could bring herself to look at it. And so in the *Magnificat* she says not, "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me the greatest of Saints," but, "all generations shall call me blessed." She seemed to imagine that congratulation upon the great mystery wrought in her would be the essence of her worship. That Saints and holy Doctors would speak and write of her virtues, that the Faithful throughout the world would take her for their model, this she was too humble to conceive. The same analogy runs also through the development of the devotion to her in the Church. At first it was summed up in the words, *Maria, de quâ natus est Jesus.* The Church defined that she was the Mother of God. And though the devotion has of course never changed its essence, though the Incarnation has been, is, and must ever be, the key to the *cultus* (worship) of Mary, yet this happy age of ours has been the first to hear her absolute freedom from original sin, even from the first moment of her existence, proclaimed a dogma of the faith. In her life-time here her happiness

was the absorbing thought of her soul, and since her Assumption she has worked her way into the hearts of the Faithful first by her happiness, and only in the second place by her holiness. How long she is before she lets herself be known, scarcely allowing herself to be noticed, except in proportion as she is wanted to be the shield of the honour and the doctrines of her Son! *Vas Spirituale, ora pro nobis.*

The next stage to the Incarnation in Mary's history affords another proof of the justice of the title, *Vas Spirituale.* The embassy is over, the work done, Mary is Mother of God, yet the next morning when she meets St. Joseph it is the same Mary, simple, equal, lowly. Not a trace upon her countenance, not a sign in her demeanour of all that had passed within her! Moses talked with God, and the people were fain to ask him to veil the shining of his countenance, but Mary's humility was too effectual a shroud to her unheard-of union with God, for the eye even of St. Joseph to discern a change. Nay, when the hour of his suspicion came, she left it to God to clear up his doubts. Nor were the silence, the hiddenness of Nazareth, less

mysterious at Bethlehem or Jerusalem. In the Nativity, the Purification, the Flight, the Marriage Feast, the whole Ministry, the Passion, yes, and on to the hour of her death and Assumption, she never broke the laws under which her humility had placed her. The spiritual vessel, the sealed fountain, the inclosed garden, she was more careful to hide, than we are to publish her perfections. This was not the least of God's gifts to her. Her humility was her exaltation. *Vas Spirituale, ora pro nobis.* Pray for us, for we indeed need your prayers. Humility is no mere counsel for us, but a sheer necessity. We are in the midst of dangers, and there is no safety for us unless we walk about in a charmed atmosphere of humility, and wear it as a sort of panoply of Paradise, from which the venomous arrows of the world glance off blunted and innocuous. But then it must be a humility which will wear, which cannot be smiled away, or talked to pieces. It must be a humility gained by humiliations, based upon the knowledge of our own nothingness, and still more, of the infamy into which we have plunged by sin. The

memory of the past should be a store-house of humble thoughts; the sins of our youth should furnish forth an endless alphabet of self-accusing complaints, beyond the pangs painted by Jeremias. Weep as we will, our tears can never keep just measure with our faults. A sea has been our destruction; and surely it is not much to ask that now it should be always high-tide with our sorrowing humility.

To be proud we have to take great pains. It is no easy task to make ourselves appear greater and better than we are. For when we have persuaded our own minds of our excellence, we have to plot and contrive how to bring others to our opinion. Hence the endless wiles to which we must have recourse in order to compass our object, the violence we are forced to do to ourselves in stooping to beg applause, not to mention the difficulty we experience in wrestling for superiority with the vast number of rivals who have entered in the lists. A career of pride is a career of labour and self-torment. But to be humble, we need read no books, consult no Doctors. The process is the simple one of opening our eyes to what we are; nothing

by nature, and worse than nothing by sin. I do not deny that there are good points in us. There is not a convicted murderer who could not find something good in himself. But even though the good were to predominate, whence comes it? It is not a thing to be dwelt upon. It is one of those objects from which we should turn as from sights of sin, because such is our weakness, that we cannot be trusted with our excellences, lest the thought of them should blind our eyes and turn our heads. Let us then learn of Mary to hide ourselves from others and from ourselves; to be content if God knows us with approval. Mary pleased Him by the union of innocence and humility; in us humility is to make up for the loss of innocence. That we may obtain this virtue, let us often cry to our dear Mother—

SPIRITUAL VESSEL, PRAY FOR US.

Ulas Honorabile.

HONOUR is but the shadow of excellence, and a false shadow, if it exceeds the reality of the merit to which it is shown, or falls short of it by being paid ignorantly or out of any base passion prompting to flattery and deceit. But when honour is the result of true discernment, when it is constantly paid by the wise and good, in the absence of whatever can either blind the understanding or pervert the will, it is a rich and valuable offering of esteem or reverence, and a trustworthy index of genuine excellence.

Now the honours paid to our Blessed Lady stand all these tests. God, Who is Truth itself, and therefore as incapable of deceiving as of being deceived, has set the example of showing Mary the highest honour, and has in all ages prompted the wisest and best, the Church and her Saints, to extol Mary above all other creatures as simply without peer or rival in the greatness of her office, dignity, and personal

merit. From the first book of Holy Writ to the last she stands forth on the sacred pages as worthy of all honour. The proto-Evangelium, or first Gospel, as it is called, in Genesis proclaims her honour as the destined vanquisher of the enemy of God and of human nature; the final book of Revelations sets forth her unrivalled glory as the woman clothed with the sun, having the moon under her feet, and crowned with the stars of heaven. In the history of her life from the wonderful embassy of an Archangel to her till her Assumption and Coronation by the Blessed Trinity, by significant acts rather than by mere words, the very highest honour was always bestowed upon her by God. "If any man minister unto Me, him will My Father honour," says our Lord, and as the ministries of Mary to the Incarnate Word, from His conception to His Cross, surpass in all respects all other possible ministries of His creatures, it was nothing short of a necessity that He should honour her above all His blessed Angels and Saints.

The Church of God, too, full of His spirit and true to His example, has at all times and in all

places honoured her whom the King of kings delighteth to honour, with such constant exhibitions of veneration and esteem as she shows to none other amongst men or angels. Invocation, praise, processions, votive offerings, feast after feast, leaving no month during the year a blank, salutations three times a day at the sound of the sweet Angelus bell, statues, pictures, medals, scapulars, rosaries, music, litanies, titles of honour innumerable, shrines and sanctuaries, pilgrimages the most noted and the most richly indulgenced, are some amongst the varied ways in which the Church strives to heap every species of legitimate honour upon the purest, the most exalted of creatures, raised by God to the unspeakable dignity of being His Mother.

The best and most enlightened of the Church's children have not been slow to imitate her example. Those who in her annals have been most illustrious either for dignity, learning, or sanctity, kings and princes, holy doctors and saints, have all been unanimous in celebrating her praises. And all this has not been an infatuation of the ignorant or a fashion of the

weakly enthusiastic, but the expression of the highest inspirations of art and the outcome of the noblest hearts and the keenest intellects, based upon the most solid and certain principles of the first of all sciences, the science of theology. Those who have seen deepest into the wonderful mysteries of God are precisely the men whose tongues have proclaimed most loudly and whose reasonings have proved most irrefragably the honour which is due to Mary.

"Honour, then, to whom honour is due." In youth and manhood, in public and in private, in the shrine of our inmost hearts, in our homes, in college, in all duties of daily life, whether sacred or profane, let us esteem it our pride and privilege by word and act to proclaim and propagate the honour of Mary. Above all, whilst we profess ourselves her devoted clients let us take special care not to bring dishonour upon her by our lives. The honour of the heart is dearest to her, and that honour is there only truly shown where the life is assiduously modelled after the virtues which constitute her excellence. Let no thought, or word, or deed

be inconsistent, then, with her honour; let every thought and word and work tend to the promotion of the honour of Mary.

VESSEL OF HONOUR, PRAY FOR US.

Ias insigne Devotionis.

DEVOTION, according to St. Thomas, is *a readiness of will to give oneself up to whatever belongs to the service of God.* Promptitude and cheerful alacrity are its special characteristics. Its object is to show honour and reverence to God our Creator and Lord, and therefore it is an act of the virtue of religion. Love is its immediate cause, and contemplation or the consideration of God's goodness and the benefits He bestows upon us on the one hand, and of our own frailty and weakness on the other, is the principal means of disposing the soul to this virtue. And lastly, its great fruit is spiritual joy. In a word, devotion is the normal and worshipful attitude of an intelligent creature face to face with its own needs and the exigencies of the Creator's glory. It is the ready offering of the heart, the cheerful consecration of our whole being to the worship and service of God.

It is important to remember this, or we may easily confound true devotion with false, or the virtue itself with its effects or with the means of its acquisition.

Now, who can doubt that Mary's heart was wholly and cheerfully given to God? Who can question her readiness to undertake anything for His glory and interest? No: Mary was from first to last a chosen and glorious vessel of devotion. From her heart as from a consecrated vase of the most delicate material and exquisite workmanship went up ever the fragrance of intensest devotion. Her life was a sweet incense of perpetual worship, and such a worship—mindful and tender, full of sweet love and awe-stricken wonder, deep in its abasement yet clear in its intelligence, simple, beautiful, magnificent, jubilant, rapturous. One while she is overwhelmed with a sense of her own lowliness transcending fear, at another time her soul exults in God and deals with Him with a holy familiarity which rises to the utmost audacities of love. But whether in her humility or her holy boldness, whether she tremulously utters her *Ecce, ancilla Domini,*

or chants aloud her thrilling *Magnificat*, all her heart is dilated with one and the same sacred fire of devotion and is exuberant with one and the same joyous self-immolation before the supreme Majesty of God. It was not merely that she was devout in her devotions, but that praise, reverence, wonder, fear, joy, love, jubilee, were the constituent elements of her life, hallowing her every thought, emotion, word, act, and sacrifice. With all the mighty promptitude of her heart, full as it was of grace to overflowing, she made an incessant oblation of her whole being to the interests and the glory of God. She was a matchless vessel of devotion.

And we call ourselves her clients and her children. Where is our devotion? Why, even at our prayers we are thoughtless, listless, mechanical. We put little heart into our assistance at the Holy Sacrifice. We too often go reluctantly to confession and receive even Holy Communion coldly. The glorious cycle of the year's magnificent festivals revolves before us and we remain unmoved, unwarmed. We perhaps grudge a little extra time given

to High Mass, or a procession, or other solemn service of the Church. And if such are what we dare to call our devotions, what are our lives? To what are they devoted? To study that we may grow up ready and well-armed champions for God and our Lady, or to idleness and vanity, and dissipating enjoyment? To obedience and regularity, and the cheerful practice of those virtues by which we can now serve God, or to self-will, and wayward petulance, and indulgence in whatever gratifies our self-love or pampers our sensuality? Sad and horrible though it is, there may be, and too often is, a devotion to mischief, to what is morally wrong, to sin and to habits of sin, that is, to vice. These are idols worse than those of wood or stone which men set up in their hearts and adore and serve with dreadful readiness of will and heartiness of purpose. This is a preposterous devotion to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Thank God, you have not come to this depth. But if you would not, you must betimes learn to make cheerful and generous efforts for God. You must strive never to be ashamed of His cause.

You must convince yourselves that His service is your only true glory and happiness. You must encourage yourselves with ready will to dedicate your studies, your school duties, your recreations, your lives to Him. Have a little energy, a little readiness, for so noble a task. Brace yourselves to some alacrity in prayer and other direct acts of God's service. Above all, apply to Mary your Mother and ask her to obtain for you the grace of genuine devotedness to the service and worship of God.

GLORIOUS VESSEL OF DEVOTION,
PRAY FOR US.

Rosa Mystica.

ALL nature is a shadow and emblem of the supernatural. Parables, which form so large a part of our Lord's teaching, are not mere arbitrary applications of the seen to the unseen, but a true interpretation of nature. They detect and lay bare real and eternally intended analogies. The beauty, for instance, of flowers was, amongst other ends, given them for this, that they might symbolize the beauty of supernatural virtues. They are parabolic revelations, utterances of God to our souls, if we would only listen to their mutely eloquent teaching. The violet is a divinely intended emblem of humility; the lily, of purity; the rose, as queen amongst all flowers, of the queen of virtues—charity, and of her in whom the queen of virtues was most resplendent—our Blessed Lady. The very warmth of its crimson hue, the ruddiness of its delicately bright pink, the rich fulness of its sweet fragrance, all its precious qualities

fit it to be the symbol of Mary, who was all on fire with the divine heat of charity, and attracted all by the surpassing perfume of this amiable virtue.

The heart of Mary is an altar on which the flame of charity burns ever bright and beautiful. Purity is the measure of divine love. As St. Anselm says, *Ubi major puritas, ibi major caritas.* Untainted by sin, entirely disengaged from all earthly affections, her heart, from the first moment of its existence until now, has ever been wholly consumed with the love of God. Seraphic ardours are cold in comparison with the white heat of her holy love of God. Others love Him by acts repeatedly renewed, she has ever had the privilege of loving Him by one single and continual act of love. Her eyes have ever been fixed on God, her every action has been the offspring of love of Him. Action and contemplation alike, acting and re-acting on each other, have ever fed the pure flame of her charity. She was not, says St. Bernard, merely penetrated with the love of God, but transfixed, wholly possessed, actuated, informed, transformed by love of

Him. Her life was love, and love was the sum and substance of her life. God was her all, and she was all for God. And oh! how happy was she in this love! Hell is the impossibility of loving; the impossibility of not loving is heaven. So that Mary's heart was a very heaven of joy and happiness.

Ah, dear scholars, we all want to be happy; search after happiness is the restless craving of all hearts. Would that we did but know how easily it is to be found! But we love what is not worthy of our love; we give our hearts to the world, to pleasure, to self, to evil, and we find no rest, no peace, no true and solid happiness. And all the while God and our Mother Mary are calling us to that which alone can give our hearts rest, peace, happiness. "My son," says God, "give Me thy heart." As St. Austin beautifully puts it, *Totum te exigit, qui totum te fecit*—"He made you all, and He demands you all." Yes, this is the secret of happiness, to love God as He asks and has a right to ask, with all the appreciation of our minds, with all the ardour of our affections, with all the force of our wills, with all

the energy of our endeavours. Till we do this, and cease to waste our love on what can never satisfy, we look in vain for perfect happiness. Let us then, as we long to be happy, entreat our Lady to obtain for us this grace, saying to her, in the words of the Church's hymn, *Fac ut ardeat cor meum in amando Christum Deum.*

But those who love God love all that God loves. Hence the all-embracing charity of Mary. Knowing that God so loved all men as to give His only Son for them, knowing her Son's love for man, even to the laying down His life for them, and obedient to the impulse which, as soon as He became Incarnate, His Heart gave to hers, she rose at once, and quitted her much loved retirement to go a long journey on foot, with haste, into the hill country of Judea, and carry to the yet unborn son of Elizabeth the treasure of redeeming love. There she stayed three months, to lavish upon the aged mother all the tender care of which she stood in need. We have another recorded instance of her tender charity in the touching miracle at the marriage feast in Cana. And

St. Ignatius of Antioch, in the admirable portrait of her which he has left us, says that she made all miseries her own, and that no one could look upon her as a stranger, so intensely did she feel for the sufferings of the sick, the privations of the poor, the helplessness of the weak, and the bereavement and desolateness of the widow and the orphan. With all her love of solitude and prayer, she was ready to forsake both whenever she could help the needy or give solace to the wretched. No cry but moved her to pity. Her eyes were often wet with tears for others, for she sorrowed as a tender-hearted Mother over the woes of the whole multitude of her children. Her very enemies were not beyond the reach of her boundless charity. Witness the way of sorrows and Calvary itself, where, amidst the blasphemies and calumnies and cruelties of men towards her Son, neither hatred nor indignation found entrance into her heart, nor so much as one reproach escaped from her lips, but she stood in her anguish to the end, offering Him to His Father as a Victim for sinners. And now in heaven, whilst her gaze is fixed upon

the Adorable Trinity, at the sight of the Father Who for love of man spared not His only-begotten Son; at the sight of the Son Who for love of man shed the last drop of His blood; at the sight of the Holy Spirit of love Who ever watches over and provides for the Church and for souls with unspeakable charity, the heart of Mary expands into a love warmer and more tender than ever, towards each and all of us, her children. Her eyes are fixed with love on us all through our sojourn in this world of trials. There is no want, no danger, no pain, no sorrow of ours, that does not touch our Mother's heart. She pleads for us when we wander from God, she wins us back to Him, she guides us and guards us in our weakness, she helps us in our feeble efforts, she leads us to Jesus, she obtains for us all graces, she comforts us in sorrow, she protects us in death.

One thing she wants of us, that we should imitate her in proving our love of God by universal love of those whom He loves. Away, then, with bickerings, disputings, heart-burnings, quarrels, grudges, bitterness. These are the

outcome of selfishness, which is the enemy of divine charity. Love one another in God and for God, desirous of promoting each other's best interests. Mary, the Mystical Rose, full of charity to God and man, says to you, in the words of St. John, "Little children, love one another."

MYSTICAL ROSE, PRAY FOR US.

Turris Davidica.

IT is impossible to imagine a good Christian indifferent to the great battle between good and evil which, wherever he is, rages around him. We cannot live at ease in this world. It might be comfortable to maintain neutrality, but we cannot help ourselves; we are under a necessity of declaring either for God or for His deadly enemies. "They who are not with Me, are against Me," says our Lord. Every man is ranged under one or other of the two standards. Now without doubt, when a good Catholic wakes to a consciousness of this fact, his condition is at least startling. The enemy's forces are numerous; on the heights and in the valleys, before, behind, and on every side of him, their bristling ranks are seen. Like the army of the giant Philistines, they are evidently trained warriors from their youth. And what is *he?* Had he arms (and he seems to himself but ill-provided with them), could he expect to meet with

David's success against Goliath? The skill of that brave stripling is not his, that he should aim his smooth stone right at the giant's head; and it is not one Goliath but a host whom he must conquer or perish. This way and that he looks to see whether there are any to support his efforts; but when he has strained his eyes on every side, he is fain to fall down and cry with Elias, "The priests of Baal are four hundred, and I only serve the Lord!" His courage droops, his heart fails; for skill, numbers, position, experience, all are against him.

True, were his faith keen and lively he might, like the servant of the Prophet, descry in the air above him myriads of angels, the army of the living God, doing valiant battle against the foes of Israel. But, alas! this comfort is denied him. Sharp of sight to descry evils, he is blind in shunning them, and sees little of what God is doing for his defence. He finds himself foiled, almost before he has entered upon the field. A stain rests already upon his honour, but he has no heart to retrieve it. The temptation then comes to take to an ignominious flight; perhaps even to desert and try to win cheaper laurels in

the service of the foe. But no; he has enough grace left to shrink from that infamy. The base suggestion makes him look upon himself as the scorn of angels and all right-minded men, a dastard hateful to Heaven, injurious to man, ungrateful to God. What then is he to do? Is he to languish in this plight for ever? Conscience, his promises, the eternal stake, the little spark of love to God which fear has not yet quite frozen out of his soul, every better motive, urge him to show himself a man and do valiantly. But on the other hand, fears multiplied and unaccountable, his inborn dislike of facing difficulties, his selfishness, his sensuality, these all struggle within him, one moment driving by threats to submission, at another speciously arguing for a compromise, or glozing over the baseness of treachery.

This is the state of pusillanimous souls; and which of us is not conscious of a greater or less degree of such weakness in himself? There are very few really courageous warriors in God's army, a mere sprinkling of Catholics, like the three hundred in Gideon's army, who are not sheer cowards. From the day that the Apostles

all forsook Jesus and fled, to this present hour, the conduct of Catholics presents a series of rashly zealous boasts and faint efforts, followed speedily by senseless panic and shameful flight.

But God in His wisdom and His love has provided for these timid souls. Notwithstanding the apparently overwhelming odds, there is a chance of victory for them. "Thy neck is as the tower of David: a thousand bucklers hang upon it; all the armour of valiant men." This neck, as the Fathers tell us, is Mary. She is the Tower of David, our ever-ready fortress in distress. Let the enemy press never so hard, let temptation batter us as if it would break down walls of adamant, much more our feeble powers of resistance; we have only, by a true devotion to Mary, to take refuge within this tower, and we are safe. In the heat of the conflict, if we frequently cry out, "O Mary, send one of thy holy angels to drive from me this malignant spirit," we shall feel an impregnable rampart set between us and sin, a new and not unreasonable valour will spring up again in our hearts.

For it is well to notice that Mary's aid gives

no countenance to sloth or cowardice; she does not come, like one of Homer's goddesses, hide her favourite in a cloud, and take him in unseen flight far away from the battlefield. She likes to see the blood and dust of the struggle upon our limbs. She shields us indeed, but she "teaches our hands to war and our fingers to fight." She nerves us to "withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Then, and then only, does she put the palm of victory in our hands and crown us conquerors, aye, more than conquerors, over all our enemies. This is why we read that this tower of David is hung about with a thousand bucklers, "all the armour of valiant men;" far from valiant when left to themselves, or holding themselves independent of Mary, but gloriously valiant as soon as she has brought them into her tower and taught them the use of the proved armour with which devotion to her is fully stored.

We may, then, assure ourselves that we are not yet as devout as we should be to Mary, if we shrink from difficulties, hate pain and trouble, and are cowardly in the face of danger; for all Mary's true clients are brave to dare and brave

to bear. On the other hand, finding ourselves weak and faint-hearted, our quickest remedy, our shortest cut to safety, is to fly for refuge to Mary, our "rock of defence," the "Tower of David."

TOWER OF DAVID, PRAY FOR US.

Turris Eburnea.

THIS title, at first conveying but little meaning to our Western ears, is evidently given to our Lady in allusion to an expression in the Canticle of Canticles. In that song King Solomon pours forth a profusion of Oriental imagery in praise of the mystical Spouse of Christ. Addressing her, he says—"Thy neck is as a tower of ivory." As our Lady is often called by the Fathers the neck uniting Christ, the head, to His mystical body, the Church, so to her is applied the title—Tower of ivory.

Now in Holy Scripture we read of towers as part of city walls, as strongholds of refuge for villagers, as watch-towers or fortified posts in frontier or exposed situations. But besides these military structures, we find also that towers were built in vineyards as almost indispensable appendages to them. They seem to have been used as lodges for the keepers of the vineyards, and in those of the wealthy were no

doubt often made highly ornamental. Whether there ever really existed a tower of ivory, or whether the expression is merely a figure of speech, it is difficult to determine. But we know that a great traffic in ivory was carried on by the Assyrians, who brought it from India, and supplied the luxurious Tyrians with it. Special mention is made of the great ivory throne of Solomon, fashioned by the skilled workmen of Hiram, King of Tyre; and Ahab is recorded to have built a house of ivory, which was probably a palace, the walls of which were panelled with ivory, and so it is not unlikely that towers of ivory, that is, inlaid or veneered with ivory, adorned the vineyards or pleasure gardens of kings. At all events, the idea conveyed by the expression, "tower of ivory," is one of extraordinary richness and elegance.

Imagine such a structure in the midst of a vineyard on a sunny slope of some hill near Jerusalem. How delicately bright its walls in the glow of the Eastern sun! How rich in sculpture by the hands of cunning workmen! How refreshing a retreat for King Solomon from the weariness of royal duties, from the

glare of State pageantry, from the heat of the crowded city! It is majestic in its simplicity, stainless in its beauty, chaste in its splendours. Fit emblem, then, of the spiritual or moral beauty of the most pure and spotless Virgin.

Is there not here a lesson for the young? We all acknowledge the wondrous beauty of Mary's character, a beauty which found expression even in her outward form and demeanour. We know, too, that the secret of this charm lay in her eminent purity. Let us but generalize, as we justly may, and we are in possession of a most precious principle of conduct. Purity has an elevating and indescribable beauty; the opposite vice is a degrading ugliness. By purity men live as angels; by impurity they sink below the level of the filthiest beasts. Purity of soul spiritualizes even the body; impurity defiles the body and imbrutes the soul. Look at the innocent, the guileless, the pure. There is about them a dignified reserve, a sweet modesty and candour, and a brightness in their very looks which commands respect whilst it wins affection. The serenity of their well ordered souls is mirrored in their very coun-

tenance. Let impurity gain entrance into the heart, and what a change! Shame, confusion, the dark look betokening an inward consciousness of guilt and fear of detection, the deceitfulness of a crooked soul that loves cunning ways, soon betray their presence. Other base passions are aroused into active energy; anger and hatred, jealousy and revenge, skulking fear or coarse effrontery, the gloom of despair or the recklessness of wanton riot, cowardice, or boastful arrogance. These, some or all, in disorderly and violent contrast, assert dominion within, and stamp with their deforming brand even the outward man. Blind, hard, stupid, the prey of vice sinks into a miry slough, and walks the earth, bringing defilement and corruption to all who are foolish or incautious enough to admit his company. He may seek by vanity of dress or ornament, by superficial elegance or effeminate affectation, to hide his disgrace. But a discerning eye easily penetrates the flimsy veil of such weak arts, and discovers the rottenness of the false heart beneath. The sepulchre may be whited, but it barely conceals the rank corruption of the dead soul within

even from the eye of man. How loathsome, how abominable must the spectacle be to the all-seeing eye of God, Whom no cunning can baffle, no disguise deceive!

As you prize your reputation, as you desire esteem, as you love what is noble, amiable, upright, beautiful in character and aspect, as you wish to retain self-respect, as you long to be beloved of God, shun in its first beginnings the insidious and degrading vice of impurity. Listen not to temptation or evil suggestion; let no bad companion seduce you from the loveliness of virtuous innocence; guard jealously the priceless treasure of a clean heart. So will your souls be as a vineyard, rich in all fruit of virtue, and Mary as an ivory tower shall keep and beautify them as pleasant gardens of the Lord.

TOWER OF IVORY, PRAY FOR US.

Domus Aurea.

THERE are two things in this title which require attention. Our Lady is called a house or dwelling; that is the first thing. And the second is that this house is declared to be of gold.

The fitness of the first appellation is at once clear. Whether we consider the plenitude of grace by which the Holy Ghost dwelt within her, or the personal indwelling of the Son of God in her womb for nine months, or again His sacramental and frequently reiterated sojourn within her breast in the Holy Eucharist, to our Blessed Lady belongs pre-eminently the title of *God's home on earth.* But on this point we need not now dwell. Let us pass on to inquire why she is called a house of *gold.* There are three prominent characteristics of this metal, each of which is clearly applicable to Mary, the tabernacle of the Most High. Gold is solid, beautiful, precious. The two former of these qualities are the foundation

of the last. For there are many beautiful things which are not valuable because their fragile nature endangers their duration, and there are many solid and durable things of no great value, because they are destitute of any great beauty. But when the two qualities are found in combination, value is enhanced in proportion to their intensity.

Now when God decreed that He would become Man and dwell amongst us, He was not only free to choose His own home on earth, but He was necessarily the builder of that home. Of course, then, He could not in His infinite wisdom design an unsuitable dwelling for Himself; and as the Person Who was to reside there was of infinite dignity and worth, the Divine Architect would construct a mansion for Himself in every way worthy of its Inhabitant. In other words, His chosen Mother would be possessed in the highest degree of every quality which could render her precious in His sight. What then does God value, the soul of man or his body; outward advantages and ornaments of wealth, honour, and delight, or inward wealth and

intrinsic excellence? This is a question which you can all answer without hesitation. The soul and its true graces and excellences are the only things which attract His eyes and on which He looks with complacency.

Oh! gaze on that spiritual building, fashioned without hands, the glorious soul of Mary. All the gold and precious stones of Solomon's Temple, which men are wont to admire as they read of them in history, what are they to the rich solidity and exquisite workmanship of Mary's soul? Tax our imaginations as we may, we can form no adequate idea of them. We must wait in patience till the dimness of mortality is taken from our eyes, till death draws aside the veil which hides from us the beauty of God's spiritual creation. Then will be revealed to us, no longer in shadowy outline, or distorted by refraction through the senses, all the grandeur, majesty, and excellence of this House of Gold.

Meanwhile let us remember that Jesus, Whose delight it is to be with the sons of men, is still looking about the earth for homes in the breasts of men; that He is anxious,

when He stoops to cross the thresholds of our hearts in Holy Communion, to find within us a house of gold, a mansion durable by constancy in His love, beautiful in the multitude of virtues and unspoiled graces which He Himself pours forth as a preparation for His abode, and precious therefore to Him above all that this world can offer. Shall we disappoint Him? Shall we not, rather, weaning ourselves from the brittle beauty of things sensible, and giving ourselves up cheerfully to be refined from the dross of our unpurged affections in the furnace, however hot, of trial, conflict, affliction, do what lies in our power to cooperate with Him in turning our souls into houses of pure gold for His reception? Shall we not pray to Mary, and study her, that we may be made after her pattern? For the closer our resemblance to her, the greater will be the interior beauty of our souls, the more solid will be the virtues which adorn them, and therefore the more worthy to enshrine that Gift of gifts, the precious Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus, His soul and divinity, from which are

never separated the other two Persons of the Godhead!

O Mary, house of purest gold, mould these hearts of ours into agreeable homes for so august a Guest!

HOUSE OF GOLD, PRAY FOR US.

Foederis Arca.

IT seems a strange thing to say, but it is unhappily true, that confidence in God is far from common amongst men. Perhaps it is that, finding we cannot trust ourselves, we grow into a habit of general mistrust, and come, from our little faith, to put very inadequate trust even in God. And yet, without confidence in Him, what becomes of our worship? Hence we find that, in His extreme compassion for us, God is always, in Holy Scripture and in His dealings with His Church, drawing our attention to the grounds of confidence in Himself. Hence, His frequent covenants with man, those beautiful exercises of His merciful condescension by which He binds Himself under laws for our benefit. The guilt of Adam throws him into the disquietude of mistrust: that mistrust, the beginning of despair, is at once met by a covenant on the

part of God that the seed of the woman shall crush the serpent's head. Sin provoked the Deluge, and with the remnant who were saved, but who, no doubt, were assailed by timorous mistrust when they stepped forth from the ark upon the yet scarce dry earth, He makes a covenant for ever, setting His bow in the cloud, as the sign which should give to all generations confidence in His word. Then we have His covenant with Abraham; then with that most mistrustful and murmuring race, the Israelites in the wilderness; and again with His servant David; and lastly the great covenant, the New Testament, in the Blood of His Son. This is the Christian covenant of which we speak when we address our dear Lady as the Ark of the Covenant. As then the rainbow makes us all confident that the world will not again be destroyed by a flood, and as the ark of the tabernacle, with its mercy-seat, being the sign continually before their eyes of God's faithfulness to His promises, filled the hearts of the men of Israel with confidence, so, and in a far higher way, Mary has been given to us as a sign and

pledge of God's readiness to forgive our sins through the most Precious Blood of His Son.

Confidence in God, then, is a special fruit of devotion to His Blessed Mother, and we should try early to gather from it this fruit, for it is peculiarly congenial to the time of youth. It is a childlike spirit, this trusting of ourselves in the hands of our Eternal Father, and it is difficult, amidst the shadows of more advanced life, to form a childlike habit if we have neglected to do so in the days of our buoyancy and brightness. Souls that turn to God late in life seldom lose wholly the dark spirit of mistrust; pusillanimity clings to them and takes out of the service of God much, very much, of its joyousness.

But those who from boyhood trust themselves with open, confiding hearts to the hands of God, feeling the sweetness of this confidence, and finding the motives to it multiply themselves daily along the path of life, are not easily forced from their loyalty, nor easily induced to forego the calm repose of self-surrender to the Sovereignty of God.

O Mary, Ark of the Covenant, obtain for

us all the spirit of holy, childlike, loyal, reverential confidence in the promises of God, of which thou art at once a fulfilment and a pledge.

ARK OF THE COVENANT, PRAY FOR US.

Janua Coeli.

YOUNG as we are, little as we yet know of life, we are all being carried along the stream of time towards death. The silence of those waters that are sucking us onward is no bar to their insidious rapidity. Sooner for some and later for others, but in reality unexpectedly soon for all of us, the hour will come for our passage from time to eternity. Can there be room for exaggeration here? Can any words express the importance of that hour, the strangeness of the act of dying? Simple it will be, simple and very short, yet when we think of it we fear it, and its cold shadow presses gloomily upon our young hearts. No wonder, for it is a punishment invented by the Creator for the sinning creature. This were enough to make us tremble, but the magnitude of the interests hanging upon our performance of this penal act, the fact that we shall probably have to perform it at a time and under circumstances when, humanly speak-

ing, we shall be least capable of high effort or attentive care, the thought that crowds of evil spirits will be busy round us to harass if not to destroy, and then the knowledge that we cannot gain any experience of the act beforehand—surely these thoughts surround death with additional terrors.

Yes! we have to die but once; everything depends upon our dying well. It will be the work of an instant, and will pass as the minutes of the day pass now, before we are well aware of it, and when the work is past it cannot be recalled. However it may have been done, well or ill, it will be simply irreparable. "As the tree falls so shall it lie."

I think I hear you exclaim, "Alas! then, the chances of salvation are all against us." And so, indeed, in one way, they are terrifically against us. There is the boiling surge before us, and without ever having done anything of the kind before, we find that we have to cross rapidly, balancing ourselves upon a footing no better or steadier than that of an unsound rope. Good God! who, then, shall be saved? There is just one thing for us: God has kept that

moment, the moment of the passage of death, in His own hands. Now, when God keeps a grace in His own hands it cannot be merited, but it has to be secured by prayer. We cannot merit a good death; we can secure a good death by prayer. Not, indeed, by any and every kind of prayer—casual, careless, half-hearted, presumptuous, or diffident. The prayer which opens the hands of God must be a prevailing prayer, a constant prayer, a vehement prayer. And whose prayer so vehement, so constant, so prevailing, as Mary's? Let us, then, retain her as our advocate with God. "Pray for us now and in the hour of our death." The Church directs us to Mary, the Gate of Heaven, when we ask how to obtain a good death.

Do you want to know whether you will have final perseverance? See whether you are continually praying for it. See whether you put meaning into your frequent recital of the "Hail Mary." If you do, the fact is one of the most satisfactory predictions of final perseverance.

That Mary will be the *Gate of Heaven* to *you* is only likely if you make such a grace the

subject of daily and special prayer to her and through her. Then the likelihood will be turned in God's own time into a blessed certainty.

GATE OF HEAVEN, PRAY FOR US.

Stella Matutina.

ONE of the most harrowing sights on earth to a man who loves God and feels His presence is the recklessness with which men live without God in the world. His absence is no pain to them. They wear happy faces and carry light hearts, though the only reason why life is not sheer hell to them is because God is more gracious to them than they are aware of, and is not inexorable in the withdrawal of His offended Majesty.

Let only this short day of respite pass, and the hour of doom strike, and then what will be the awful pain of loss! Draw aside the curtain of vindictive fire and gaze down into the black cavern of hell, where God is not, save in the necessities of His immensity. A lost soul has just found its way into that, its unhome-like home. In all the strength of its disembodied vigour, and in the fierceness of its penal immortality, into what a tempest of undying

efforts does it break forth! Its radical love of the Creator beats it against the granite prison-walls, thrusts it up against the impassable barrier which separates it from God, and dashes it down again with fury. It seeks its centre and cannot reach it. It chafes with clamorous velocity up and down its burning cage, wasting an agonized immortality in monotonous and bootless struggles.

Rage goads it on to get at God—to seize, dethrone, destroy Him. Frantic *agonies of thirst* for Him shriek within it for one drop of water to slake its heat and abate the horrors of a perfectly self-possessed and conscious frenzy. The *fury* of despair tries to rive asunder the tight fetters of gnawing fire which pin it down, and drag it ever back with cruel wrench from its natural propension towards its Uncreated Centre. One awful vision of Him it has, the vision of His almighty vengeance, and on this it rushes, and clasping at God, embraces the keen flames. It leaps to the length of its fiery tether after Him and encounters demons; recoils as far the other way, but only to find that it has dashed into an affrighted and affrighting crowd of ruined souls.

Oh, for one hour of summer sunshine, for one moment of peaceful starlight, for one pulse of the delicious sounds of earth, for one fanning breath of evening air, to charm away just for once the overwhelming sense that all its natural powers are frustrate, its radical love a curse, the absence of God eternal! For all this is but the absence of God's grace, God's joy, God's presence. The nearest thing to this on earth is a soul in sin. Between a soul in unrepentant sin and a soul in hell there is this difference—the night of the one may be succeeded by a morning, the night of the other is endless. The pleadings of Mary, to which God is never deaf, are not hushed as long as life lasts in the sinner. Mercy is, through her, still open for the soul. Rightly, then, is Mary called the Morning Star. When God frowns the heavens are dark, the soul is benighted, but the Morning Star never sets, never suffers an eclipse. Blot out its light from the sky, and with it all hope would be scared away, and love and grace be sheer impossibilities. Leave it, and it only, still calmly swinging in the firmament, and though the sinner's eyes be perversely riveted on earth,

though the sinner's feet be turned away from God through rough and erring ways, yet we cannot, must not, despair for him. If he will but lift up his eyes to the Morning Star, its brightness will be too much for his perversity; won back to follow it, his wanderings will be at an end. "Under its auspices," as St. Bernard says, "he will arrive safe at the end of his voyage." To look at Mary is to be devout to her, and to be devout to her is a sign of already indwelling grace or of its speedy coming. Devotion to Mary is God's way of telling the soul that He has not forgotten to be merciful, that He will presently Himself arise upon it with healing in His wings. Mary is no idle ornament in the heavens. Her rising was a pledge to mankind of the approaching day-spring from on high. Her privileges were enough to excite suspicion among the devils that their hour, the hour of darkness, was about to be succeeded by the light of the eternal day. The damned themselves might hope were it possible for them to catch a glimpse of Mary.

Thrice unhappy, then, are they who will not look upon this star of truth and love. To

wander without a guide, to faint and perish with cold, to pine away in hopelessness—this, this is the lot of all who are deprived of her succour. But thrice and four times happy, on the other hand, are they who lift up humble eyes and suppliant hands to the Morning Star. In their hearts it shall always be cheerful morning. In spite of drifting clouds and gusts of stormy winds, they, like Israel amidst Egyptian darkness, shall always enjoy light in their dwellings. And as no true client of Mary ever lost his soul, the morning of this life shall brighten into the meridian splendours of a happy eternity.

MORNING STAR, PRAY FOR US.

Salus Infirmorum.

A SOUL which is in mortal sin is dead; a soul which is in the state of grace is alive, but not necessarily in good health. There is a great deal of sickly spirituality. Indeed, there are few pious souls in really robust condition; none which have not some ailments from time to time; none which do not require continual care and occasional nursing.

But what is more important to remark is, that we are not to expect a complete cure, in this life, for our spiritual weakness. To the end there will remain in us some, if not many, defects which cannot be cured, defects in respect of which our sanctification will consist, not in the cure, but in the combat. Perhaps we have received from sin wounds which will maim or lame us for life, or our souls may be subject to constitutional maladies which can be controlled and limited, yet never quite got rid of. Hence we shall have to endure, to be patient,

to put up with ourselves; and we must resolve to content ourselves with medical treatment, ceaseless physic, regulated diet, and a multitude of restraints. If it were not so, we might safely do without a director, or at least expect to do so some day. But as it is, if we are practical, we shall do the best we can under the circumstances.

I have said all this because many spiritual invalids are in too great a hurry to be well, and when they apply to Mary, Health of the sick and feeble, they do so with an impatient vehemence for awhile, and presently not finding themselves fully cured, they begin secretly to distrust her power, and consequently are no longer careful to secure her constant aid.

What we are to expect from Mary, if we are diligent clients and docile patients, are fresh supplies of vigour to neutralize the languor of ill-health, cheerfulness to keep up the unceasing fight against ourselves, discretion to enable us to take great care of ourselves, and vigilance to be on our guard against a great many things which, though indifferent in themselves, would infallibly ruin our health by bringing on a paroxysm of some old disease.

Remedies our Blessed Lady has in abundance, but you must not expect absolute cures. If you are sensitive now, you will probably have to suffer all through life from this kind of delicate weakness, but Mary will prevent its developing into deliberate thoughts against charity, in other words, into active disease.

Lassitude may cling to you, and the monotony of piety oppress you. She will strengthen you to combat against and overcome, though you may not wholly expel from your soul, the sense of weariness. Excitability, indecision, restlessness, pusillanimity, narrowness of mind, inertness, these and many other weaknesses which, though not sin, are possible sources of sin, may also by her help turn out to have been the raw material of holiness and glory. Let us continually and earnestly appeal to Mary, as the Health of the Weak, to enable us to turn them to account; only let us beware of expecting, what we have no right to look for, the absolute eradication of constitutional and, unless given way to, faultless weaknesses.

HEALTH OF THE WEAK, PRAY FOR US.

Refugium Peccatorum

THE condition of sinners, even in this world, is very pitiful. They are outcasts. God, Whose love is the sunshine of existence, has gone behind a cloud for them; and who knows whether that cloud will ever be withdrawn? Thus, in the hearts of sinners, a cheerless gloom reigns. And then, they are starving with cold, for the garment of grace is loosened from their shoulders, and they have to wander over the face of an unkind world, either utterly naked, or clad only with the mockery of those poor rags which earthly consolations may afford. Gloomy, and cold, they need a home into which they may turn for shelter from the storms of life, but sin has shut the door of their Father's house against them, and so they are starving vagrants—starving both from cold and hunger; from cold we have seen why; and from hunger, because the true food of their souls is locked up in the store-rooms

of that very house from which they are excluded.

But, what is worse even than all this, they are under sentence; they have, as it were, a price upon their heads, and wherever they go the thought stares them in the face that any moment the ministers of vengeance may be upon them.

Death seems ready to start up from the ground beneath their feet with the chilling call, "You are wanted." Wanted! what for? for judgment? for eternity? Chasms yawn round them; devils throng about, stretching out their eager arms; clouds settle over the scenes of life, and they stand shocked and petrified, while the voice, "You are wanted," draws them like the force of gravitation, and the penal abyss seems ready to suck them in like a vortex. Oh, the deep anguish of their downward path!

Surely there is need of a refuge for such homeless destitutes. That need has not escaped the eye of God; but with Him to know is to supply, and behold the invention of His pity, Mary, the Refuge of Sinners! How speedily

the chasms close; how hurriedly the demons are dispersed; how brightly the sun shines out! The sinner, whose head was bared to the storm, and over whom the thunderbolts of divine wrath were already hurtling, is safely under shelter, with the storm-proof mantle of Mary closely folded round him. How, let us pause to ask, is all this wrought? By kindness. Mary is one of the highest manifestations of God's kindness, with this as her peculiar prerogative, that she is all kindness without any admixture of sternness or severity. Her kindness wins the sinner and does the preliminary work for the re-entrance of grace into the soul.

Proof is not needed here. Your own hearts are this very moment thrilling at the mention of that kindness which has so often poured its beneficent showers upon yourselves. We know of much; but there is much more of which we do not know. We have been shielded from temptation, stopped at the verge of sin, nerved to the combat, brought back from our wanderings often and often by the kindness of Mary.

Do we feel this? Then let that feeling

become within us a well-spring of sweetness, a power of kindness towards all around. Every day is rich in opportunities of kindness. Kind thoughts we can always cherish. Kind words will cost us little. Kind actions, easy yet valuable, are constantly being suggested to us. In this, too, a little goes a long way. Kindness is doubly blessed, to him that receives and him that gives. It may make apostles of us, and help us to win easy victories over the enemy of souls. We may, by winning sinners, recommend ourselves also to the special protection of Mary, the highest, brightest specimen of purely human supernatural kindness, of Mary, whose kindness has made her the divinely appointed Refuge of Sinners.

REFUGE OF SINNERS, PRAY FOR US.

Consolatrix Afflictorum.

WE were born with tears in our eyes into a life of sorrow. And while life lasts, sorrow under one or other of its many forms—care, anxiety, uneasiness, mourning, regret, weariness, vexation, disgust, desire, penitence, and others too numerous to mention—is sure to be our companion to the journey's end. We know what this means. The clouds of sorrow are divinely intended to pour down showers of grace upon our souls. The sea of suffering is meant to land us on the shores of eternal happiness. But the question which sometimes suggests itself to our young hearts as we gaze over the wide expanse before us is, whether we shall ever get safe across this sea. Shall we have strength to breast the waves which unknown storms may raise around us? Or will contrary winds blow us out of our course, and frustrate our early hopes? There would be something unspeakably dreary in this forecast, did we not know that we shall not be left

without *comfort* in our passage. Not merely *help*, but *comfort*. Our Leader and Lord went through an ocean of sorrow, and He looked, but there was none to comfort Him. But it is not His will to leave *us* comfortless. He does not put us to a trial which strains even supernatural heroism to its utmost. He allowed His Human Nature to look about for one to comfort Him, and though He denied Himself the satisfaction of that want, He taught us by the act that there is no harm in seeking comfort under our afflictions. Only we must seek it in the right quarter. We are apt to have recourse to the wine of human consolations, in the hope thereby to deaden our perception of grief, and counteract its effects. But in all such wine there is gall. *In novissimo mordebit ut coluber.* At the last it will bite as a serpent. The comfort which we drink so easily from creatures, whatever the sensation of relief at the moment, must leave behind the after-taste of remorse. It is therefore a deception and a snare. Real comfort is His alone to give. And to Him accordingly we must look. Let us then turn to the crucifix. Not only is the heaviness of

His sorrow the lightening of ours, but He cries out to us from the Cross, in one of those words which are the utterances of eternal decrees, "Behold, your Mother." He foregoes all the comfort which she could give Him, that He may bestow it all on us. By that word He declares, what had been determined from all eternity, that Mary is appointed Comforter of the Afflicted. Her sinless heart is to be the treasure-house of all our consolations.

It is not merely because she has suffered so much herself that she is likely to sympathize with all other sufferers. No, it is her divinely appointed part in the great scheme of redemption, it is her *office* to comfort the afflicted. The sufferings of Calvary are the means which God took to fit her for its discharge. She suffers with the suffering Jesus, not to comfort *Him*, but to be the fitter to impart to *us* the comforts of the God of all consolations. Her very *example* is to be our comfort. The natural result of sorrow is loss of confidence in God, peevishness, and petulance with Him Who permits, while He could hinder, our suffering. But when we see that God permitted the dolours

of His own Mother, our fretfulness subsides, and our confidence revives. When we gaze on the royal heroism of her endurance, we are shamed into, at least, a patient acquiescence in our own little sufferings.

Again, Mary learnt the *art* of consolation upon Calvary. Nothing teaches like experience. There, then, she fathomed all the depths of suffering; there she learnt the weight of all our burdens; there she experienced every sorrow, not excepting sorrow for sin, by no possibility her own, but ours. And so it is with a skilled hand, as well as a loving, maternal heart, that she ministers to the afflicted.

Come then, ye waves of sorrow, welcome now, for the light of Mary that falls upon you! We will rejoice in the valley of the shadow of death! We will glory in nothing, save in the Cross of Christ, which Mary anoints for us. Hitherto we have drowned our cares in dissipation, or have gone forth from the 'chamber of dole within us to sun ourselves in the smiles of men, or flatter the senses with unlawful pleasures. But we have always returned to 'ourselves sadder than before, or, if not sadder, in plight more

pitiful, insensible to the guilt we had contracted, and unconscious of the blacker woes we had brought upon our heads. But now, sweet Mother, Consoler of the Afflicted, we ask no other joys but thine; we know that we are safe under thy motherly protection, and wish to share in sorrows which thou turnest for us into joys, and which are the surest pledge of future glory.

COMFORTER OF THE AFFLICTED,
PRAY FOR US.

Auxilium Christianorum.

THIS title was added to the Litanies of Loreto by St. Pius V. in thankful memory of the decisive victory gained by his forces, united with those of Spain and Venice, over the Turks at Lepanto. Those persistent enemies of Christendom, after a long career of victory, were there routed, not so much by the combined Christian fleets, as by the evident intervention of our Lady, in answer to the prayers of the holy Pope.

A Feast of our Lady under the same title was instituted by Pius VII. on the 24th day of May, the day of his return to Rome, in 1813, after five years of captivity at Savona, for he observed that that was the very day on which the treaty had been signed between Spain, Venice, and the Holy See, which, when all seemed desperate, bound them together in league against the Turks, and turned the tide of fortune once more in favour of Christendom.

Nor were these the only signal favours of the kind received through Mary. The Festival of the Rosary owes its origin to another victory gained over the Turks in the time of Gregory XIII., and was extended to the whole Church by Clement XII., in thanksgiving for their signal defeat near Belgrade, whilst their route before Vienna is commemorated in the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary, instituted by the venerable Innocent XI.

Thus, whether against a Mahometan foe from without, or against dangers scarcely less terrible from within, Mary has proved herself the effectual Help of Christians.

Is not all this just what we might have expected from her whom Christ gave to all Christians as their Mother, and appointed to be Queen for ever over His Church? All graces come to the individual soul through Mary; through her, too, is displayed the protection of God over the collective body of the Faithful. She who crushed the serpent's head, is more than a match for all other enemies of her Son and of His Church. God has chosen the weak things of this world to confound the strong.

The power of the Church against all possible enemies, against ancient heresies and modern infidelity, against Pagan Rome, and Moslem hordes, and anti-Christian oppressors, against revolutionary impiety and atheistic persecution, rests on no material basis of armed force, or political pre-eminence, or accumulated wealth; it consists not in worldly wisdom, or in diplomatic craft, or human sagacity; it has for its sole foundation the irrefragable promises of Christ, and for its unfailing hope the all-powerful protection of Mary.

This is a cheering thought for us in the midst of our present troubles. For what do we see around us at this moment? The spirit of Antichrist is abroad. Protestantism, after three hundred years of ever widening separation from the Church, has developed into its logical issue. Heresy and schism have grown into infidelity and revolution. One by one the powers of this world have ceased to be Christian. And having given up God for the new paganism which worships the State, there is growing up in them all an intense hatred of the one witness and guardian of the revealed

truth of God—the holy Catholic Church. They are possessed of mighty temporal power, and they use it to strip the Head of the Church of that temporal sovereignty which secured the free exercise of his spiritual dominion. They have at command overwhelming civil authority, and they employ it to suppress Religious Orders, to drive the Pastors of Christ's flock into exile, to shut up the Father of the Faithful in prison, to legislate upon marriage and education and ecclesiastical endowments on principles which are diametrically opposed to those of the Church. They find an active and powerful ally in a licentious press. Hundreds of thousands of newspapers and periodicals and more pretentious books are daily propagating in every corner of the civilized world calumnies and misrepresentations and fallacies, which furnish the malicious with materials for invective, and seduce the shallow, simple, unthinking multitude by every artifice of rhetoric, and every trick of reiterated and complicated lying, into a belief that the Church is the enemy of the State, the one great hindrance to progress in science, in material prosperity, in all that the hearts of men are

chiefly set upon desiring. They have gained over the learned by flattering their pride, the rich by pampering their luxury, the mob by pandering to their restless passions. They stoop to underhand machinations and treacherous plots. They avail themselves of the hidden powers of those secret associations which have now spread their ramifications through all the strata of European society, and which are bound together by oath under terrible sanctions to do their worst to uproot Christianity, and drive God out of every sphere of human thought and action. At this moment, flushed with their successes, they are eager for fresh victories, and whilst in their boastful arrogance they pour forth torrents of anger and contempt upon the Church of God, they are taking counsel together, with an anxiety which is inconsistent with their confidence, how they may make an end of her, and blot out her very name from the face of the earth.

If we are not on our guard, and careful to renew continually in our hearts the principles of faith and the grounds of our Christian hope, this vast array of worldly power and physical

force, of moral influence and intellectual prestige, may easily daunt our courage, and from cowardice we may sink to base treachery and desertion. But if we remember how the unarmed fisherman conquered ancient paganism in its central stronghold ; how, again and again, the countless hosts of Mahomet were driven back discomfited when victory seemed secure; how, at the beginning of this century, a captive Pontiff was too much for the greatest conqueror whom this world has ever seen ; how heresy after heresy has been brought to nought at the very moment when it was ready to shout its triumphant pæans; if we call to mind the promises of God which cannot be withstood, and the protection of Mary, who ever shields the Church with her all-powerful protection, our flagging spirits will revive, our faint-heartedness will be transformed into superhuman courage, our confidence will become firm and immovable.

The Church may seem weak, her children may be oppressed, her Supreme Pontiff may be persecuted to the death, but let us rest calm and confident. Let us raise our united supplications incessantly to Mary, the Help of

Christians, and, when least we think it, help will come, the power of evil will be checked, the Church will come out once more from the conflict triumphant over all her enemies.

HELP OF CHRISTIANS, PRAY FOR US.

Regina Angelorum.

HEAVEN is a place of royalties. It contains countless thrones and kingdoms, each of which surpasses in grandeur the united glories of this world. The very names of several of the choirs of Angels imply this—Powers, Principalities, Thrones, Archangels. How high and glorious must that throne be which is raised above all these! How exalted the power of her who, being Mother of the Angels' King, is rightfully their Queen!

At first sight, this title of our Blessed Lady seems intended mainly to raise our idea of her power and glory, and of the honour which God will have paid to her by all the universe. And, no doubt, such is the lesson we may and ought to draw from meditation upon the sovereignty of Mary. Earthly splendour pales before the magnificence of her Court: and our ambition for the honours and favour of the world is quenched by the thought that we have a place waiting for

us in Mary's heavenly kingdom. We fall on our knees, and dedicate ourselves to her royal service, and, like St. Ignatius at the beginning of his career, hang up our swords before her shrine.

At present, reflect on what, as less obvious, may not have struck you before.

Heaven has its history as well as earth. The angelic kingdoms have not always been in their present state. Before all time God was—blissful, and alone. Then, by a word, Heaven was created, and its vast mansions peopled with bright spirits, bright in their own nature, and brighter yet by the state of grace in which they were created.

Now God put these spirits upon their trial. We do not know, with absolute certainty, what that trial was. But we may be allowed for the purposes of meditation to assume the truth of the teaching of one great School of Theologians —a view sufficiently probable in itself, and bringing into special relief a practical truth which holds good on any supposition. According to this view, then, God would not admit them to the blissful vision of Himself except through Him Who is "the Way, the Truth, and

the Life." They were called on to adore in spirit and in truth the Word made Flesh. Faith in the Incarnation was the condition of their service of God. This mystery, involving the doctrine of the Divine Maternity, placed the Angels in the alternative of forfeiting their hopes of supreme happiness, or of realizing them through the mediation of Mary. Look at them: the thrones of eternity are before their eyes, and oh! how simple the condition of making them their own! They have but to become by obedient love the disciples of Jesus and the servants of Mary. Listen to the words of wounded pride. Lucifer exclaims, "The Son of the woman shall never be my King, nor His Mother my Queen. I will not serve." The infection spreads, the plague-stricken make many a wide gap in the angelic ranks. God withdraws from those who have first withdrawn from Him, and the proud Angels fall into the abyss of reprobation, there to mourn the loss of that bliss into which, by devotion to Mary, their faithful comrades enter. Rejection of Mary is, then, the forfeiture of Heaven; devotion to Mary a title to its joys. To secure that title, daily

renew your humble and loving homage to the Angels' Queen, and when assailed by him whose ruin began by hatred to Mary, and whose incessant labour to ruin others is but the product of that same stubborn enmity, then turn to her who has crushed his head, and say, in the words of a prayer which has rescued many a soul in the hour of temptation, "O Mary, Queen of the Angels, send one of thy holy Angels unto me, to drive away thine enemy, this most malignant spirit." Again and again will the scared demon be thus forced to abandon his attempts, and the guiding hand of her obedient ministers will lead you safely into the presence of their Queen.

QUEEN OF ANGELS, PRAY FOR US.

Regina Patriarcharum.

THE long and glorious procession of holy men who, each in his day, have marched heavenwards, is headed by the Patriarchs, or Fathers of the Old Testament, who handed on from age to age the torch of truth and the promise of a Saviour made to Adam. These venerable Princes, Noe, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others, were distinguished especially for their unswerving attachment to the law of God, their hatred of the idolatrous worships which surrounded them, and above all, for their firm faith in a Redeemer to come. To take the most signal example, Abraham, "the father of the faithful," in spite of his old age and the barrenness of Sarah his wife, doubted not that he should have a son, and that from the descendants of that son the "Desired of nations" would be born. And when the child of promise had been granted him, he was ready, at God's bidding, to

sacrifice him, nothing doubting that God would find means to accomplish His designs. Here was a faith rising to sublimest heroism. And such, in greater or less measure, was the faith of all the other Patriarchs.

Now see how justly Mary deserves the title of their Queen. She surpassed them all in the heroic firmness of her faith, and she had the happiness of seeing what they only hoped and desired to see. On the simple word of the Angel, she believed unhesitatingly the most sublime and incredible of mysteries, the Incarnation of the Word in her womb without prejudice to her virginity.

She gazed on that little, shivering, weak, suffering Babe in the manger; she saw Him grow up in the midst of poverty and obscurity, working with His hands for a livelihood, doing nothing brilliant or remarkable; yet with her whole mind, in spirit and in truth, without so much as wavering for an instant, she worshipped Him as the Eternal God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the King of glory, the Sovereign Lord of all things. When He entered on His public life, she was the first to show her faith in His

divine power before He had yet wrought one miraculous sign. On Calvary, in the midst of the humiliations of His Passion, at the foot of the tree of shame, when all forsook Him, when most of His Apostles even lost their faith, and openly apostatized, when the Prince of the Apostles, though inwardly believing, had not yet unsaid his words of cowardly denial, there was no shadow of unbelief cast over the brightness of her faith. She stood where others fell, and she stood to the very end. She received the dead Christ upon her lap, and her adoration was as deep as her anguish. Christ rose again, and though it was after much doubting and fear and confusion of mind and heart that His disciples were reclaimed from unbelief, Mary never lost her calm and tranquil possession of the faith. The faith of the Patriarchs had never been put to such continual, varied, and tremendous tests. Even Abraham was not allowed to consummate the sacrifice of Isaac; but Mary saw her Son slain before her eyes, and yet held firmly that the victim of death was the Lord of life, that the Crucified was God. The Patriarchs, then, cannot but salute her as their

Queen, because she outvied them all in their characteristic gift of faith.

Once more, they were privileged to receive messages from God assuring them of a future Redeemer, but that He should be God and Man, the Word made Flesh, was not made known to them. They learnt something about Him now under one shadowy type, now under another; the revelations made to them were partial, dim, obscure; they lived in the early and long dawn of Christian truth, distant ancestors of Him that was to come. But Christ, the Sun of Justice, rose in all His splendour upon Mary. The Angel's message to her unfolded the very depths of the mystery, and announced His immediate advent as her Son. A moment, and her heart thrilled with the joy of His presence. He, the promised One, the long looked for, the Desired of nations, was hers, her very own most blessed Child. By the height, then, of her privileges above theirs, and her nearness of blood relationship to Him their respected King, she not only deserved the title, but enjoyed the prerogatives of Queen of Patriarchs.

Now the object of their faith and hers was the same, and is the object of our faith also. Do we honour them for their firm adhesion to the truth, for the simplicity, the promptitude, the sincerity of their faith? Do we recognize their elevation and dignity, because to them was committed the custody of revealed truth, and they were true to their trust? Well, then, we too, as children of the Catholic Church, must bear in mind that it is a glorious privilege to possess the faith. The obedience of faith, the submission of the intellect to revealed truth, is not a degradation, but a blessing. The clever, the learned, the scientific, if they reject the truths of faith, are but miserably groping about in outer darkness, seeking and never finding, losing themselves in a labyrinth of idle speculations, and sinking in the miry slough of error. They may boast that they are wise, but they are become fools, changing the truth of God into a lie, vain in their imaginations, blinded in their folly. In these days, and in this country, in the face of a public opinion which is never tired of exalting the natural at the expense of the supernatural, which esteems knowledge of all sorts and pro-

gress of all sorts provided they tell upon the temporal condition of the individual or the race, and hates or despises revealed truth, sometimes in explicit theory and always implicitly and in its practical bearings upon human life, personal, social, and political, we are in the position of the Patriarchs, who had to hold fast their faith in the midst of idolatrous nations, to cherish and to prize the treasure committed to their keeping, and to run counter to, and be in constant and active conflict with, the spirit of their age. We need all their attachment to truth, all their hatred of error. We need all their jealous precautions for preserving the integrity of faith. Our lives, our thoughts, by frequent reference of all things to the principles of faith, must be a continual, hearty protest against the maxims of the world, and fashionable views of what is right and wrong on subjects which bear even remotely upon religion. In these things, generally, to think with the majority is to think falsely. If we wish to hold the truth, we must be content to be singular, for we must be content to think with the Church, to espouse what is derisively called the clerical side, to take care to be in

harmony with that authority which an apostate world has shaken off, and is eager, if that were possible, utterly to destroy.

Cowardice in profession of our faith, want of sympathy with ecclesiastical authority, or the adoption of so-called liberal views, which are inconsistent with genuine, uncompromising adhesion to the teaching and direction of the Church, would make us unworthy sons of the Patriarchs, and brand us with a dark stigma of ingratitude, seeing that we are privileged beyond them by the possession of greater light, and the blessed experience of that which was to them but a distant and faintly outlined promise.

Let us pray earnestly to the Queen of Patriarchs to obtain for us always the great grace of a staunch, hearty, unflinching, uncompromising spirit of faith.

QUEEN OF PATRIARCHS, PRAY FOR US.

Regina Prophetarum.

THE title of Prophet is given in Holy Scripture to the members of those companies or colleges which Samuel instituted at Ramah, Bethel, Jericho, and other places for the study of the Law. These formed the *prophetic order*, but did not necessarily possess the *prophetic gift*, though generally the inspired Prophets came from some college of Prophets, and belonged to the prophetic order. Sixteen in particular there were who, in the course of Jewish history, were specially called and commissioned by God, and intrusted with His message to His people. They are the sixteen whose books find a place in the Canon of Scripture, men chosen by God not merely to be, like their fellows, national poets and annalists, moral teachers, and extraordinary exponents of the Law, pastors and preachers of religion, but also, and this was their most essential characteristic, to be instru-

ments of revealing God's will to man, as in other ways, so, specially, by predicting future events, and, in particular, by foretelling the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the redemption to be effected by Him. And there were others who, though not all authors of inspired books, possessed the gift of prophecy, such as Elias, Eliseus, and, pre-eminently, Moses and David. All who were Prophets in the higher sense, and with whom alone we are concerned in treating of this title in the Litanies, received divine communications in dreams, or in ecstasy or prophetic trance, or in other more ordinary modes, such as a divine impulse given to their thoughts, or, as is expressly stated of Moses, God speaking to them "mouth to mouth, even openly, and not in dark speeches." What they heard and saw they also, in some measure, understood, though not so as always to enter into the full meaning of the words they uttered.* They were the spokesmen of God, the mouth by which His words were uttered, for "the Holy Ghost spoke by the Prophets," and St. Peter assures us that "prophecy came not in old

* See Daniel xii. 8; Zech. iv. 5; 1 St. Peter i. 10.

time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke, moved by the Holy Ghost."

In the New Testament, also, the same gift was continued in its various forms, whether of predictive power, as in the case of St. John who wrote the Apocalypse, or of supernatural illumination to receive and communicate and expound the revealed truths of Christianity. But it is clear from the order of titles in the Litanies, that when our Lady is called "Queen of Prophets," reference is made only to the Prophets of the Old Testament, only to those who gradually unfolded the designs of God for the redemption of mankind in the series of Messianic predictions—to Moses, and David, and Isaias, and the rest of that succession of holy seers.

By type and figure, and sometimes in prophetic vision, as in the memorable one of Isaias, one and all of them foretold the advent of the Virgin Mother, and pictured her sublime virtues and singular prerogatives. The figures were most various, distinct, mysterious; yet, when joined together after the event, the faith of the most simple Christian cannot but recognize the

exactness and truth of their adaptation to our Lady, who, in her own person, was their final realization, justifying them even in the most minute details of her life. How then do they who, whilst they prophesied of the grace that should come to us, inquired and searched diligently what the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, now that they, no longer in prophetic vision, but in actual reality, gaze upon the Mother of God, worship her as, in a special sense, their Queen! They were inspired by God to announce her coming. She gives full life and meaning to their representative symbols, those symbols which they loved to dwell upon in faithful and patient hope, though they could not adequately read their import until their fulfilment in her life and history. If the shadow rejoiced their hearts of old, how do they now delight in the glorious substance!

Mary is the Queen of Prophets, also, in another sense. Our Lord said that St. John the Baptist was "a Prophet, yea, and more than a Prophet," because he was His immediate forerunner, and pointed out Him present Whom the Prophets did but indicate as to come in the

future. But it was Mary's prophetic office to reveal Jesus to mankind as her Son; she did not merely speak by the Holy Ghost, but by that same Holy Ghost overshadowing her the mystery of the Incarnation was wrought within her. She gave Jesus to us, and she herself narrated to us, through St. Luke, the wondrous embassy of the Archangel Gabriel to her, and how that stupendous miracle was accomplished which he was commissioned to announce. She is the organ of revelation, the mouth of God, to tell us how that was done which the Prophets declared should be done. And what prophecy of the ancient Law is there which approaches in sublimity and fulness that inspired song which she poured forth at the Visitation in holy exultation, not that the word of God has come to her, but that God the Word had come and taken up His abode in her, and that therefore from henceforth all generations should call her Blessed? Yes, in her prophetic office Mary was raised above the whole line of Prophets by the direct intimacy of the divine communications made to her, by the import of her message to mankind, and by the glowing fervour of her

rapturous song. Our Lord is sometimes called in Scripture the Great Prophet, the Prophet of the Father; His Mother, then, is most fitly styled the Queen of Prophets.

Oh, for docile hearts to take in her lessons! Her words are messages to our souls from God. They tell us what most nearly concerns our highest interests. They are revelations of the Eternal Word made Flesh for our sakes. They lead us to Jesus, and lay upon us the sweet command which once she uttered at the marriage feast in Cana, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." Do it at once and cheerfully, as children obey their mothers, and your reward will be the miracle of a changed heart, full no longer of the unstable water of natural desires, but of the generous wine of divine charity.

QUEEN OF PROPHETS, PRAY FOR US.

Regina Apostolorum.

ABOUT fourteen years had passed since the Ascension of our Lord when a very wonderful event took place at Ephesus. Our Blessed Lady had, we may believe, been living there in the house of St. John. Day by day she had gone the rounds of the Stations of the Cross which her own hands had reared. Day by day had the sword of love and sorrow pierced her heart, and now the miracle by which her life had been sustained was about to cease. Long since the Apostles, who in her company had received the Holy Ghost for their special work, had gone forth into every region of the earth, but now, by an impulse from the same Holy Spirit, unknown to each other, they bend their steps towards Ephesus, and meet around the couch of their dying Queen.

Strange, that these zealous men should thus pause in their Apostolic labours, that the

interests of so many newly-planted Churches should be left by the planters to themselves! Surely this was to postpone God's work to their own affections, and to sacrifice souls to their own cravings for consolation!

Yet what they did was at the bidding of the Holy Ghost. He that was sent to teach them all things taught them this—to think less of their own labour than of obtaining Mary's blessing upon it. To gain that blessing He would have them leave all and undertake the most trying journeys. They made the journey and gained the blessing. Oh, who can doubt that their Queen more than made up for their absence, and that, when they did return to their flocks, their work, renewed in her name and sweetened by her blessing, went on with double energy and ten-fold fruit?

Time has rolled on since then, but the law and condition of Apostolic success has not been altered. There is no ground gained where Mary is not preached, no foundation secured where Mary is not invoked. At her feet Preachers, Confessors, Founders of Religious Orders, holy Popes, have ever laid their works

—at the commencement to invoke her aid, at the end to pay a debt of gratitude.

Ask them, and they will tell you that the secret of their success has been the time stolen for intercourse with Mary; that their refreshment amid the wear and tear of Apostolic exertions has been the stream of graces following them everywhere at the all-powerful intercession of Mary.

St. Dominic with his rosary, St. Francis with his devotion to our Blessed Lady's joys, St. Ignatius hanging up his sword at her shrine and devoting himself and his followers to her—all looked to her for help, and all at her hands received the fulfilment of their hopes.

We are servants of Mary. Are we never to do anything for her? Which is most worthy of her Sodalists—to go to Heaven by themselves, or to bring other souls with them as the fruit of their zeal and the evidence of their devotion? The latter course, the truly privileged and happy course, is open to all those who are at pains to withdraw frequently from the distractions of life and to beg Mary's blessings on their labours.

You know that there are many ways of becoming Apostles, that no lawful state of life excludes our chance of sharing in the toils and honours of Apostleship. Let us not, then, hesitate or falter, but fill our hearts with the spirit of enterprise, and rely with simple confidence on the Queen of Apostles for success.

QUEEN OF APOSTLES, PRAY FOR US.

Regina Martyrum.

THERE is not one amongst us who has not been, or will not be, called on at some time to make a sacrifice, to give up something for God. Sacrifice is the very essence of Christian life, a necessary condition of our warfare, for love is the price of Heaven, and sacrifice is the only genuine test of love.

Yet how long it takes us to learn this lesson! We crown ourselves with roses, and fill our bowls with the costly wine of pleasure; the voice and promises of pleasure ringing merrily and loudly in our ears forbid access to thoughts of self-conquest to be achieved, and patient suffering to be cheerfully undergone. The devil, seeing us to be true children of Eve, sits at our ears with whispers of fair fruit, good to the eye and pleasant to the taste. Enjoyment is the bait which he sets for us. But, my soul, what enjoyment was there on Calvary? There the Lord of all those sources of enjoyment which

we prize is dying in torment and disgrace; and she who, if any, had a right to enjoy the goods of this world, the spotless Mary, Mother of God, stands by. *Stabat juxta crucem Jesu Mater ejus.*

She did not excuse herself from suffering because the sufferings of Jesus were more than ample propitiation for all actual, nay, for all possible sins. Though she knew that the Eternal Father was more glorified by each single pang of her Son, than His honour was stained by the accumulated guilt of all generations of sinful man, she saw no motive for self-exemption. She stood beside the Cross, and her martyrdom, in point of duration at least, exceeded the Passion of her Son.

Look at her. Besides the natural love which she bears Him as her Son, her heart throbs also with the far deeper consciousness that He is her God. The supernatural is added to, and heightens beyond measure, the natural. Nor is it merely that she sees Him in pain, and knows that He must die, but she has the keenest, the acutest sense of His shame and ignominy. He, Whom she loves and adores

unspeakably as her Son and her God, is at mid-day lifted up in the face of the sun, amid throngs of every tongue and people; by all derided, mocked, despised. She indulges not her sad thoughts in private, but amid the rude jostling of Roman soldiers, and still more brutal Jews, she stands the patient hearer of every insult, every blasphemy that is uttered. Nay more, the triumph of His enemies was little, but the hand of God is turned against Jesus, and she is by to measure, as far as finite mind can measure, the meaning of those words, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." In her ears rang those doleful words, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Oh! what a more than womanly control had she over the feelings of her heart, to stand firm and unwavering by the Cross; to assist at that first, that Bloody Mass; to unite her intention to that of the High Priest Who offers Himself for the sins of men; to give up thus the only treasure of her heart, and bow her head, without a thought of faltering or reserve, to the holy will of God! Yes, indeed, if Jesus is a victim, Mary is a victim also; if the white-robed army of

Martyrs adore Him as their King, they no less honour her as their Queen.

After this, shall we her clients have the face to pamper our bodies; to give free range to our passions; to palter with God when He demands of us some little sacrifice — little, because though it were life itself, all would be little by the side of Mary's offering?

Whether, then, the vices of youth—levity, thoughtlessness, idleness, lust, anger—are yet unconquered in our souls; or whether the rotten branches be by God's help lopped off, and the fruits of good habits be beginning to form in green clusters of rich promise; let us persuade ourselves of this, that Mary, the Queen of Martyrs, is not set before us to excite barren wonder, but to stimulate us to the spirit of generous sacrifice.

O holy spirit of sacrifice, all have need of thee; the Religious, in his search after perfection; the man of the world, that he may keep free from mortal sin; the advanced in virtue, that they may snap the last ties of earthly affection, soar into the broad expanse of heaven, and fly freely to their God; and the young, the

inexperienced, the beginner, above all if he be a Sodalist of Mary, that the work begun in him may not be spoilt, and another frustrate saint, another broken vessel of grace, be cast away among the vast heap of lost, because unpenitential, souls.

Sacrifice is the only remedy for the fatal spirit of enjoyment. Eve, our carnal mother, was ruined by her self-gratification; Mary, our spiritual Mother, became the glorious Queen of Martyrs by her self-sacrifice. Choose between these mothers. Rather, will you not answer, we have chosen? Well, then, do not belie your own happy choice; and if you have not strength yet, ask for grace to take your stand upon Calvary, beneath the shadow of the Cross, and begin at once to conquer your carnal repugnance. Begin with self; offer up that which you know has firmest hold upon your hearts; lay the axe to the root of that passion, be it vanity or pride or love or fear or anger, which you are conscious to yourselves has most deeply struck into your heart's soil, and if the occasion be external, tear away with ruthless hand that creeping parasite which has most closely woven

its pretty but stifling tendrils round your souls, that the tree of grace may not only have room to throw out healthy shoots or green leaves, but that its forming fruit may not fall off before its time, but, to God's greater honour and glory, ripen into maturest virtue, a thing impossible unless you strive to imitate the Queen of Martyrs in her unhesitating spirit of sacrifice.

QUEEN OF MARTYRS, PRAY FOR US.

Regina Confessorum

A CONDITION of labour in this life is fatigue. No kind of exercise, whether of mind or body, can be prolonged without it. Thought and study tire, manual labour tires, our very recreations tire.

Now when we are tired, the next step is to give up that of which we are tired. In this one of the chief miseries of the spiritual life consists. We actually sometimes tire of God; prayer becomes irksome, and God's service, weariness; and then comes the temptation to turn back, or, as we are apt in self-deceit to put it, to take a little rest; and rest, in the sense of stopping, is sheer ruin. In other words, perseverance is no easy thing to our inconstant natures. And, indeed, there is something perhaps more appalling in the slow, monotonous, unceasing, wearing mortification of the Confessors, than in the sharp but short pangs of the Martyrs. Yet this former is seemingly to be our course, and how

are we to nerve ourselves to the undertaking? We must not set before us a life half for God, and half for the world; a life of fitful vagaries, now given to pious practices, and now abandoned to worldly pleasures. We must not make up our minds never to rise above the lowest levels of Christian life. We must not sit down and weep by the wayside, wringing our hands in helplessness. For all these courses would probably end, not in low sanctity, but simply in no sanctity at all.

What then? Shall we start with sturdy resolution, and take our determination to keep steadfastly to one thing, to meditate upon one truth, to work at one passion, to maintain in all things an unbroken unity, or rather uniformity? This advice is good where attainable; but all are not sufficient for these things. How are those to manage, who as yet do not find courage enough in their hearts for the manful plan just suggested?

Are they to be forced to fly high before they are fledged, or to be withered into disgust by the imposition of a work to them so dry? No, there is a way for them; a way trodden with

success by many before them, by such men as the Blessed Father Peter Faber—a way of variety in unity, and unity in variety.

It is a bad thing to load ourselves with a variety of *vocal* prayers; nothing is so likely to make us tire. But it is not so with *mental* prayer; there variety does not imply inconstancy, does not unnerve; it beguiles the weariness of the way without hindering our progress. Nay, as scene after scene opens upon our view all through the course of the ecclesiastical year, we are almost insensibly lured on, and the limbs move pliantly and do not ache.

You all know how little fatigue you feel when strolling amidst lovely scenery; much less at any rate than assails you on a straight, level, and uninteresting road. Well, would you but open your eyes, say for this month, to the fresh and glowing, the varied and picturesque regions which surround you in the devotion to our Blessed Lady, you would find your heavenward path far more full of joy and gladness, of smiles and sunshine, than ever yet you have imagined. For every passage in Mary's life is a rich and

wondrous picture. From her birth, so like in its circumstances to that of Jesus, through her childhood in the Temple, through the stupendous mysteries of the joys of her Maternity, on to the untold sorrows of her heart as she stood by the Cross, and then for fourteen years more of desolation; through her dying life at Ephesus to the glories of her crowning; through all this history, not scattered up and down, but following each other in rapid succession, are mysteries which thought cannot exhaust, and where the imagination may revel without fear of satiety or excess.

Study these, dwell affectionately upon them, turn them into that of which they are intended to form the material, into hot-hearted prayer. The more you traverse these realms of beauty, the keener will your relish of them grow, and the more eager your pursuit of that perfection of which they are the highest expression possible to man.

Thus lured heavenwards (for every step here is advance towards God), constancy will be rendered comparatively easy, and you may rest confident that Mary's prayers will crown your

efforts with final perseverance, that is to say, with the only thing necessary to place you among those holy Confessors, whose Queen she is.

QUEEN OF CONFESSORS, PRAY FOR US.

Regina Virginum

VIRGINITY has ever been most highly eulogized by the Fathers and Saints of the Church. It is, say they, sister to the angels, a queen amongst virtues, a brilliant triumph over the passions, the possession of all goods. It is, living in the flesh, not to live according to the flesh but according to the spirit. By it the soul is emancipated and the body spiritualized. By virtue of it holy virgins grow to be what the Saints call them, the choicest flowers in the garden of God, masterpieces of grace, the fairest portion of Christ's flock.

We have already seen that Mary is the Virgin of virgins. Without example or precedent, and without constraint save that of love of God and of the angelic virtue, she in her early years bound herself to God by vow in the holy state of virginity. Not till assured by the ambassador of the Incarnation that the Mystery to be wrought in her would be no

prejudice to her vow, would she consent to accept the offered dignity of becoming Mother of God. Accepted and the mystery accomplished, she became for ever a living miracle, single and unique of its kind, in which the glory of motherhood and the prerogative of virginity were combined.

To her then all the spotless band of holy virgins look up as to their spotless Queen. Upon her model they desire to mould their hearts and lives; to her queenly protection they betake themselves; round her throne, when their day of trial is past and their victory sealed by eternity, they naturally group themselves as her special family and glory.

Now, does Mary rule all these for nothing? Are their virtues, as some are apt to think, negative and colourless? We sometimes fancy all this bright band, young and tender, unspoiled by the world simply because not brought into contact with it. We dream of secluded nooks out of the great highway of life, as if such souls were harebells that would surely be trodden down beneath the tramp of hurrying multitudes, and could not rear their

heads again after any pressure heavier than a soft wind's breath or the foot of a lightsome butterfly. A suspicion of almost feminine delicacy attaches itself to our thoughts of them, because we look, and truly, on their characteristic virtue as something easily tarnished, frail, brittle, which a touch scarcely rude might shiver into atoms. But a little thought will quickly show us that we must not argue from the delicacy of the gift to the weakness of its possessors. Christian life is a warfare; the path to heaven is steep and rugged. The thoughtless impetuosity of boyhood, the rash confidence in self of inexperienced young men on their entrance into the world, the hurry and bustle of middle life, the weariness of declining years, are all dangers that beset the soul in its life-long struggle heavenwards. What shall we say of natural difficulties from within, of hereditary bias, of peculiarities of individual dispositions, of the conflicts of rebellious passions common, though in various degrees, to all? Add to these the terrible force of external circumstances, the torrent of seething vice which is ever ready to

sweep the unwary or the timid into its headlong stream, the contagion of bad example, the sneers of free livers so hard to stand proof against, the perverse advice of the corrupt who envy innocence, and of set purpose lay snares to catch souls, the allurements of pleasure, the laxity of public opinion, the subtil poison of worldly maxims, and you have an array of enemies, each of them strong enough to work incalculable ruin. Yet through these every Christian has to fight his way struggling for heaven. Nor do the perils of life end here. The powers of darkness, whose name is legion, are bound together against the soul of each and every Christian warrior, sometimes terrifying him even to the shaking of his inmost soul by the fierceness of their assaults made commonly, such is the cruelty of malignant fiends, in moments when he is off his guard or especially weak or weary; sometimes luring him on from one fault into another and another, each more serious than the last, until the brink of some dreadful precipice is reached and the poor soul, entangled and dismayed, sees no issue but a fatal leap; at others, with more

subtil malice, disguising themselves as angels of light and, under the appearance of good, laying snares hidden enough to deceive even those who are most enlightened and most advanced in virtue.

Courage, surely, of no common order is needed to nerve the soul for such a combat. A stout heart, a wary step, a watchful eye, must be his who wins his way victorious over enemies so numerous, malignant, and astute. The weak fall, the unwary are entrapped, the slothful perish. Few are those who do not suffer many a wound, and frequently come to grief, in this lifelong campaign. How glorious then the heroism of those who not only gain the final victory, but bear themselves so nobly through every stage of their career that when the day of triumph comes they are found to have kept their purity of mind and body untarnished, and to have carried so precious and so delicate a treasure without a fracture through the din and tumult of a thousand battles! From their earliest days they must have been men of war trained to wear the whole armour of God, and wield the weapons of spiritual warfare

with skill and daring. Theirs the *shield of faith* wherewith they were able to quench all the fiery darts of the Evil One. Strong in the thought of eternity, they despised the world, the flesh, and the devil. To them the allurements of sense were bursting bubbles not worth a man's looking at, an amusement fit only for children. The kingdoms of the world and the glory of them were in their eyes but a conjurer's illusion, mere dream-painting, drifting and evaporating like a summer cloud. They had one answer to the devil—*Vade retro Satana* —and in that word they conquered. When ease, amusement, unbridled talk, equivocal jokes, familiarities, inordinate affections, the thousand and one trifles to which so many devote their lives, were held out to them, again they snatched up the shield of faith, and as good soldiers of Christ, ready to take heaven by violence, they crucified the flesh, and cheerfully embraced what the flesh shrinks from—pain, labour, assiduous work, holy austerity. Did the charms of freedom and a life of exemption from rule and restraint present themselves, again the shield of faith was their

protection from ambitious fancies, and they cried—*Mihi absit gloriari nisi in cruce Domini nostri Jesu Christi.*

Theirs again the *helmet of salvation,* moderating all excess and regulating the inclinations of nature with reference to food, sleep, recreation, health, books, games, employments, persons, places. In a word, they were full of the spirit of abnegation, which curbs and controls all random impulse, even towards apparent good.

Theirs, lastly, the masterly handling of *the sword of the spirit* to resist all sudden onslaughts of the devil on their faith, hope, charity, religion, or chastity. By going at once directly counter to the enemy, eliciting an act of the very virtue assailed, and using some watchword from Holy Writ, they captivated their intellects to the obedience of faith, clove asunder the phantoms which scared them, turned blasphemy into adoration, the suggestions of impurity into chaste longings after the love of God, aversion and revenge into active and all-embracing charity.

Yes, the crown of virginity is the reward of

souls heroically strong and vigorous. Dream not then of sharing their glory without sustained and manly effort, nor think that Mary, Queen of Virgins, will secure this inestimable prize for you unless you are willing to imitate her and this her chosen band of most highly favoured clients, by courage in mortifying your unruly passions, in denying your natural inclinations, and sustaining the warfare of continual self-conquest.

QUEEN OF VIRGINS, PRAY FOR US.

Regina Sanctorum omnium.

THE Saint of saints was Mary's subject as He was Mary's Son. By Him the revolted world was conquered back to allegiance to its Creator at the cost of His own Blood and life, and in return for this great work the Eternal Father gave to our Divine Redeemer the office of King over His re-established kingdom, the Church. By right of conquest, by right of purchase, by right of gift, as well as by right of birth, Jesus is Supreme King over His Church. All those who have been called to be saints, whether in the Church militant, suffering, or triumphant, are His subjects. He is King over all the saints.

Now we read in the history of Solomon, who, in his kingship, was an especial type of our Lord, that beside his throne there was set another, the throne of his mother, who sat at his right hand. We might then naturally expect to find, as in fact we do, that Jesus,

on entering into His kingdom, showed a similar honour to *His* Mother. And so the Church applies to her the words—*Astitit regina a dextris tuis, in vestitu deaurato, circundata varietate.* He has associated her with Himself in royal dignity. Where He is King, she is Queen. She is crowned Queen over all the saints in heaven, in purgatory, and on earth. Over all these she exercises the full rights and functions of royalty, queenly munificence, queenly clemency, and queenly power.

She is Queen of heaven. Not only does she surpass the Angels in purity, the Patriarchs in perseverance, the Prophets in knowledge, the Apostles in zeal; not only do the courage of the Martyrs, the long-suffering of the Confessors, the chastity of holy Virgins, find in Mary their combined and highest expression and ideal. Her crown is no mere symbol of gifts already bestowed, of merits already accumulated. But by the decree of her Son she is invested with queenly authority. Those who were her clients on earth are her loving subjects in heaven. They do her bidding; they glory in being at her entire disposal. Now we know

that through the love and compassionateness of Mary, and through the place she holds in the divine plan of redemption, her throne is an intercessory throne. She is the constant and untiring Advocate of her children here on earth, and of each one of them. Can we doubt that she bids all the saints in heaven join their voices to hers on our behalf, so that the interest taken in each of us by our brethren in heaven is simply universal? Oh, what countless numbers of holy hands are ever lifted up for us to, and with, the Queen of heaven! And all the while her Son is ever ready to hear. Solomon said to his mother—*Pete, mater mea: neque enim fas est ut avertam faciem tuam.* The Heart of Jesus is not less lovingly alive to filial duty. All heaven then is by Mary enlisted on our side.

She is Queen of the holy souls in purgatory. For is she not their Mother? And is not a mother's ear keen to catch the least cry of distress, even when inaudible to others, that her children raise? Oh, with what love, with what zeal for God's glory, with what remembrance of the Passion of Jesus, with what

delight in her prerogative of mercy, does Mary bend from her throne over that abyss of sacred suffering! She intercedes for them, she sends her Angels to them, she bids our Guardian Angels prompt us to pray for them, she obtains the multiplication of Indulgences for their release. Shall we not constantly, then, have recourse to her on behalf of these dear souls of our brethren?

Lastly, she is Queen of all the saints on earth. In every heart where Jesus has set up His throne she reigns with Him. Our dear Lord and our Blessed Lady are inseparable in the true Christian's thoughts; they cannot be divorced in his affections; they hold united sway over his will. Devotion then to Mary is a sign of right belief, a gauge of our love of God, a rule of Christian conduct. Where she is not, Jesus can never be. If she is not our Queen, He is but a rejected King, dishonoured and dethroned. Oh, then, from our hearts, and not merely with our lips, let us choose this our Mother for our Queen, with this confidence, that the more entirely our whole being is consecrated to her love and service, the greater

will be our growth in holiness, the quicker will be our passage through purgatory, the higher our place in heaven. Upon our loyalty to Mary whilst we are members of the Church militant, depends our chance of special succour when we become members of the Church suffering, and the enhancement of our glory in the Church triumphant. May the Queen of all Saints obtain for us a continual increase of love and veneration for her, and an ever-growing intensity of devotedness to her happy service!

QUEEN OF ALL SAINTS, PRAY FOR US.

Regina sine labe originali concepta.

IN the fact of our dear Mother's Immaculate Conception, now known to be a divinely revealed truth, devout souls see a three-fold triumph—a triumph of God, a triumph of human nature, and a triumph of Mary.

God triumphed. There had been a time when it seemed as if His arch-enemy was winning universal victory. By the introduction of sin into the world and by its speedy and world-wide propagation he had gone far to spoil the fair work of God's creation. He had reduced mankind to the slavery of sin. He had made God's world his world and had become its prince and master. He had marred and disfigured what was originally beautiful, soiled what was pure, degraded what was noble, enslaved what was free. But in the midst of his career of havoc and ruin he is suddenly arrested by the outstretched hand of God, Who says to him—"Thus far shalt thou go and no farther."

Against Mary the devil could do nothing. In her, through the pre-eminent grace of God, our nature was gifted from the first and always retained the beauty, integrity, purity, nobility, and freedom of original innocence. Soul and body, she was sinless, stainless, full of grace, and entirely under its dominion. Her whole being was an empire in which God and reason reigned sweetly and peacefully with undisputed sway. No rebel passion or evil tendency could rise within her in revolt, or so much as for a moment disturb the universal harmony. Into that Eden no serpent could enter. The triumph of God was complete and absolute.

This fact, taken with the analogy of experience, teaches us a lesson of confidence in God. He never suffers His enemy to prevail utterly. In our own days, though the demon of pride, infidelity, and revolution may seem to be let loose and to be running riot in the world; though for a time he may rob Rome of her sovereignty, shut up churches, drive out Jesuits, poison education, loosen the bonds of marriage and of society, persecute priests and bishops, and blaspheme Christ; yet we may rely upon God

that when least the impious fiend expects, he will be stopped in mid career, and bound by the terrible, invisible hand of Almighty power.

Our nature also triumphed in the Immaculate Conception. In Mary and in her alone do we see unfallen man. Where others end she began. The aim of all holy souls is thoroughly to purge themselves from sin that they may be united in perfect love to God their Creator. That is the summit of their desires. From that summit the sanctity of Mary starts. Conceived without stain, rescued from the first from every touch and taint of sin, from the first her soul was inseparably joined to God in a union of perfect love, more perfect and more sublime than that of all the saints and angels in Heaven. "Wisdom built unto itself a house, and the foundation thereof is laid upon the summit of the holy mountain." In others the redeeming Blood of Jesus is a cleansing grace, in her it was a preventing grace. Mary is the one, single, unique specimen of pure, unbroken, untarnished human nature, raised to supernatural holiness and never fallen. To her, then, the whole fallen race of man can look up, and without fear of pride or

blasphemy glorify itself in her as worthy of all honour, because she is the sole representative of what it was before the fall. In her our nature triumphs, because in her alone it never yielded for an instant to the dominion of the devil.

Yes, blessed Queen, and this is *thy triumph too.* By thy sinlessness thou has become worthy to crush the serpent's head. In the very hour of Satan's victory over our first parents, God held thee forth, as it were, in His hand above and beyond the reach of sin, and from that hour the devil knew his fell purpose was baffled, because through thee he should be crushed.

Do we wish to triumph over evil and share in Mary's victory? Then we must fight, fight perhaps a hard and weary battle against our passions and inclinations, against the examples, maxims and allurements of the world, against the fierce assaults and subtle temptations of the devil. But in that lifelong combat with the powers of darkness, what strength, what hope of victory is ours, who see in Mary's Immaculate Conception the triumphant power of God, His triumph and hers and that of our nature over an enemy who trembles at the very mention of

the name of our stainless Queen, and writhes with the shame and agony of conscious discomfiture beneath her victorious feet!

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PRAY FOR US.

Laus Deo semper et Mariæ.

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